*The role of the PPG is to work collaboratively with the Watling Street Practice to protect, maintain and where possible enhance the services and facilities and so achieve the best possible experience for patients. Members are volunteers, drawn from the registered patients and carers from each of the 3 practices and meet every 6 weeks; Notes of each meeting are published on the WSP website and are also available, on request by email.*

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**Notes of the Meeting of 6th January 2025 at Stony Medical Centre at 1030**

**Present:**

John Marshall, Chairman;Edwin Botelho, Practice Manager Shenley Church End (SCE) and WSP Lead   
Joan Crossan, Janice Barnfather, Gill Thompson, Crad Allerton, Sue Graham, Ruth Lewis, Practice Manager (all SMC); Michael Cato, SCE.  
  
**Apologies:**

Nick Cooke, Great Holm (GH)

**Guest:** Cheryl White, Reception Manager SCE

**Welcome and introductions:**

The Chairman, John Marshall (JM) welcomed everyone to the first full meeting of the new, unified WSP PPG. He explained that there had been an initial meeting on 15 November 2024 between WSP management and the Chairmen of the 3 practice PPGs to agree the administrative arrangements for the new unified PPG, at which he had been elected Chairman. He added that thanks were due to Crad Allerton who in addition to being a long-serving PPG member, had agreed to continue in his role as the PPG’s Note-taker.   
  
**Watling Street Practice PPG  
  
a) Role, remit and membership**

JM and EB summarized the outcomes from the first meeting as follows;

* JM will serve as Chairman for the next 12 months, to January 2026
* Edwin Botelho (EB) is the WSP lead, responsible for PPG liaison.   
  EB will be supported by Faye Clarke (FC) Reception Manager, GH
* the PPG remit is unchanged.

**b) Meetings**These will continue to be held every 6 weeks but to meet the differing needs of PPG members, **the venues and times will change;**

* meetings will rotate around the 3 sites; initially, meetings   
  - at SMC will continue to be Monday, daytime at 1030  
  - at SCE will be evening, commencing at 1830  
  - at GH will be evening, time TBC (Nick Cooke to advise idc)

the individual Practice Manager for the site of the upcoming meeting will be asked to arrange room booking and refreshments (if possible) and will be invited to attend the meeting.  
  
**Notes of PPG meetings; publicity and recruitment**

Patients’ interest in the activities and potential membership of PPGs is historically very low. Membership numbers of the previous PPGs show considerable variation (SMC 6, GH 3 / 4 (?), SCE 1. The meeting agreed that an early aim and goal should be to increase patient representation / membership of the PPG, especially from GH and SCE.   
  
Publicity is key and whilst the link on the WSP website home page  
<https://www.stonymedicalcentre.co.uk/patient-participation-group-ppg>  
gives general information about the PPG, it was **agreed** that in future, the Notes of each meeting would also be both posted on the website and sent by global email to all patients who had agreed to receive electronic communications from WSP. It was further noted that a recent patient global mailing from SCE to draw attention to the PPG received approx 250 expressions of interest, so further guidance to patients about the remit of the PPG and the role of members is needed. This will be incorporated into the Notes template. The meeting **agreed** a number of actions as follows;

* to adopt the email address [watlingstreetppg@gmail.com](mailto:watlingstreetppg@gmail.com)   
  A mobile ‘phone number is required for verification and JM offered his ‘spare’ number. JM to discuss with EB how to proceed. **JM & EB**
* after review, the Notes of this meeting would be both   
  posted to the website and sent to patients by global email **EB**

**WSP News**

**IT and telephony**  
1. a unified phone system is to start in February that will share the current three familiar but separate, site specific incoming phone calls across the 3 surgeries. This is intended to ensure the queues on each line are evenly balanced. It was suggested that the PPGs might be involved in the choice of ‘on-hold music’.

2. new IT tablets, designed to streamline information gathering are to be provided at each reception to improve administration and, apparently reduce the need for document scanning by the WSP back-office. The tablets will be at a height seated users with a tilt mechanism for users of varying heights. The tablets will be refined as and when new NHS app improvements are made.

EB asked whether PPG members might assist with their implementation by being available to help patients use them where needed. There was agreement in principle, with the proviso that a briefing and training is given. It will be beneficial for all if the PPG can be involved at the earliest stages of new initiatives.

**SCE News**

Sheryl White attended the meeting on her first day as Reception Team leader. (NB It was noted that SMC has a Reception Manager, GH and SCE have Team Leaders; the PPG **recommends** that WSP, in pursuit of unification and for clarity should use the same job titles across all sites).

New LED lighting has been installed and this has changed the ambience in a more welcoming way.

Dr Mulk has left the practice and his patients are being shared amongst the other doctors to provide a more equitable balance.

**SMC News**

Roof repairs have been completed and the internal ceilings damaged by water will be made good during 2025.

Dr Grinyer is reducing her hours; two new doctors are being appointed, one based at SMC and one at GH.

There have been alterations to some of the clinical nursing staff responsibilities, especially with respect to the provision of Minor Illness and Minor Operations nursing functions.

**GH News**

It was noted that the parking facilities were not the best, especially for mass vaccination sessions; this would be taken into account in future.

**All site issues: Availability of appointments**As reported to the last SMC PPG meeting, the availability of AccuRX has been gradually reducing. Previously, the issue was apparently limited mainly to non-urgent appointments, but the problem has increased and spread, with the service frequently closing (very) prematurely on a daily basis. This has given rise to increasing patient frustration, with reception staff bearing the brunt of their dissatisfaction and has resulted in complaints from patients.   
  
The PPG expressed its disappointment and concern as previously, the PPG members at SMC were able to proudly extol the excellent service provided by the SMC practice; this is no longer possible. RL and EB, as Practice Managers, have drawn this to the partners’ attention but to date, changes to address the problem have not been forthcoming.

One of the PPG’s strengths is the breadth of knowledge and skills of its members, drawn from a range of work experience over many years. The PPG recognizes that the major transition to create the WSP is ongoing and that the limited availability of clinical staff resources is a fundamental underlying factor. However, we strongly suggest that the reasons for and cause(s) of such a rapid decline will only be fully understood by back-tracking to identify the point at which performance started to deteriorate and the previously excellent service provision ***in respect of same-day and future non-urgent appointments*** started to fail. Notwithstanding those observations, the PPG recognizes and welcomes a number of service improvements that WSP has recently introduced and for the avoidance of doubt, reiterates that a core function of the PPG is to be a support group which includes the role of Critical Friend.

**AOB**

In response to a query from a PPG member, EB will review the ways in which blood tests can be combined for individual patients with uniquely individual needs, to reduce the number of patient visits and clinical staff time. **EB**

Ellis Marshall, the recently appointed WSP Social Prescriber is to be invited to attend the next meeting of the WSP PPG. **EB**

**Dates of next meetings**

**10th February 2025 at Shenley Church End, evening at 1830   
24th March at Great Holm, evening, time tbc.**