Patient Participation Group (PPG) - Good Practice Guide

**Purpose of this guide**

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of volunteer patients, carers and GP practice staff who meet regularly to discuss and support the running of their GP practice.

The NHS requires all GPs to have a PPG as part of the GP contract.

This guide has been developed by Newham PPG network in collaboration with NHS North East London as part of a Newham PPG toolkit. It is intended to help PPGs and practices in Newham with guidance on how to set up and run a PPG.

The toolkit includes this guide, a terms of reference document and templates for agendas and minutes.

The guide is intended to inspire and share best practice. A PPG may choose to use this guide as it is or adapt the documents in collaboration with the PPG membership.

**What PPGs can do**

A PPG can look at the services the practice offers, patient experience and how improvements can be made for the benefit of patients and the practice. Each PPG is different, but they all have the aim of making sure that the GP practice puts the patient, and improving health, at the heart of everything it does.

A PPG is open to every patient on the GP practice list to join. There are no membership requirements except that patients must be registered with the practice, carers of patients can also join and do not need to be registered at the practice. PPG members should as far as possible, be representative of the practice population and include people from different genders, ages, ethnicities, disabilities and health needs.

A PPG should work collaboratively and positively with the practice to improve services by building two-way communication and co-operation between the practice and patients, the healthcare system and wider community.

Feedback gathered by practices and PPGs can take different forms such as surveys, ongoing patient feedback, testing and reporting of services and systems.

PPGs can help improve health literacy, acting as health champions and amplifying health and social care messages. They can connect patients to the right services.

A PPG is not a complaint forum, it should be a space where feedback is considered and solutions or suggestions for improvements can be made.

**Starting a PPG**

The PPG should be patient led and supported by the practice. Both the practice and PPG should consider:

* Aims/objectives
* Practicalities
* Any previous baggage that needs to be addressed
* Who can join (patients and carers)
* Where they can meet
* Any budget available to operate

**Recruiting to the PPG**

The PPG and practice can decide how patients sign up to the group. You might have a sign-up form on the practice website, printed form in the practice, or an email to contact to then be sent a form.

To raise awareness and sign people up as PPG members think about promotion across different communication channels.

* The practice may be able to send messages to the patient list as text messages or emails.
* Put up posters in the practice and ask for permission to use local notice boards.
* All the practice team should be aware of the PPG and how to mention becoming a member when engaging with patients.
* You could also consider promotion at community venues like local supermarkets, libraries, practice events and other community events.
* Use awareness days to promote the PPG.

**Communication**

As well as using existing communication channels run by the practice, think about what channels could be used by the PPG. These might include social media platforms which can be used safely and effectively without having to build up a contact database.

Messages should be:

* Clear
* Polite
* Honest and open

Use the communication channels to:

* Share agendas, minutes, action plans and meeting reminders.
* Engage with the membership between meetings.

Be clear on who is responsible for PPG channels and log in details. Always remember rules around confidentiality and GDPR.

Also consider how the PPG communicates with the practice between meetings, to avoid duplication and keeps tack of requests or questions and answers.

**Structure and membership**

It is up to the PPG to decide on the way in which the PPG is organised. Where a practice has a high volume of interest in participating in the PPG, a smaller committee should be selected. The selection process should be agreed by the PPG and practice. Consideration should be given how the committee communicates with the wider PPG membership and how the committee meets the practice and makes decisions.

If the PPG uses a voting system between members or a committee consider if the practice team attending the PPG also has a vote or just practice patients.

Think about roles and responsibilities, selection process and how long someone can serve in certain roles such as the PPG chair.

See the terms of reference document for more information on meeting formats and structures.

The PPG should support new members, sharing skills, experience and knowledge.

**Running meetings**

The PPG should decide on how frequently they meet and how. Meetings must be accessible to all members. Technology permitting, the PPG can consider holding hybrid meetings comprising both face to face and virtual. The PPG is responsible for the meeting agenda and chairing the meeting.

For meetings, the PPG should consider:

* Role of the chair
* Minute taker
* Sharing the agenda before meetings
* Accessibility of information and meeting venues
* Provision of facilities at in person meetings
* Ensure everyone is heard
* Support from practice

Example templates for an agenda and minutes are included in the toolkit.

**Addressing challenges**

Remember the PPG is not a complaint forum, there are other spaces and procedures to deal with complaints. Remind people of how complaints can be dealt with and try to maintain a positive and constructive approach to problem solving.

The PPG may also encounter differences in opinion, try and work with the practice to resolve these.

Try to build and maintain momentum.

**Feedback**

Not everyone will want to join the PPG but will be keen to share their views, think about the different ways patients can share feedback and inform the work of the PPG without having to commit their time as members. This could include comment boxes, surveys or engagement events.

Inform patients on feedback, how this has been discussed by the PPG and possible actions.

**Celebrate success**

Be sure to share success stories on issues resolved and results achieved with other patients through newsletters, local media, social media, and word of mouth to encourage more PPG engagement.

You may decide to share success at an annual general meeting to reflect on the year just past and set aims and objectives for the year ahead.

**Newham PPG Network**

The Newham PPG network brings together members of patient groups from across the borough to share their experiences and learn from each other to then take these back to their PPGs. They meet monthly. For more information about the network ask your practice manager.

**PPG resources and support**

All practices should have a PPG and can share ideas to inspire each other. Talk to other PPGs for ideas and support or look online for information sources, including the [Patients Association](https://www.patients-association.org.uk/use-our-toolkit-to-set-up-your-ppg).