

# Hollies Patient Forum

# NEWSLETTER

No. 4 March 2024



The Hollies Patient Forum (HPF) is the patient voice of the Hollies Medical Centre (HMC)

HPF is a 'Patient Participation Group' that allows patients to offer their views, experiences, suggestions and ideas to the Centre through a strong and close working partnership between patients and the practice.

## HPF Steering Group

Information on the Group, its work, and the Notes of its meetings are available at <https://www.theholliesmc.co.uk/the-hollies-patient-forum>

## We're recruiting

We have vacancies for the HPF Steering Group. If you're interested, we would love to hear from you. For more information, please see <https://www.theholliesmc.co.uk/the-hollies-patient-forum> If you want to apply, please email [hpfegroup2@gmail.com](mailto:hpfegroup2@gmail.com). Meetings are every two months, alternately in-person and on Zoom.

## Steering Group Changes

Diane Davies, who has served on the Group since 2018 and has been Chair for the last two years, has left. We are grateful for her outstanding service and wish her well. Our new Chair is Ian Hodgson, who has written about his experience on the Group later in the Newsletter.

## The Hollies News

Dr Nikki Hall retired at the end of February after 22 years in the Practice. Two new partners will join in April: Dr Eleanor Cumberbatch, previously a salaried GP, and Dr Craig Fishwick.

Andrew Smith had moved from Deputy to Practice Manager. Fran Draper, our Business Manager and previous Practice Manager also retired in February. Jo Streets has left the Health Care Assistant Team after ten years.

Jon Vinson joins as Clinical Pharmacist in April.

## HPF e-group

For many years, the Forum has had the benefit of input from its e-group members. The Steering Group regards e-group members as those with an active interest in the Practice and a source of up-to-date information on the patient experience.

**There are currently around 80 members, and we would like more! There is no limit.**

**If you would like to join the e-group email [hpfegroup3@gmail.com](mailto:hpfegroup3@gmail.com)**

Below are comments from an e-group member on their experience.

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I first noticed a request for volunteers to become members of the HPF e-group a couple of years ago. I was happy to offer my time, mainly to do some proofreading and review text/documents. I have been with Hollies for 12 years, since moving to the area, and although I haven't had to attend the surgery very often during that time, I have found the service to be very good, and all staff have been friendly, helpful and professional. I am a keen supporter of the NHS.

I think my experience of being in the e-group is perhaps atypical because I have limited experience of using all the services on offer and do not know any other patients. I have been asked to proofread one newsletter during that time. I would like to hear about more volunteering that is required. The notes provided by the Steering Group are informative and show the level of work that goes into responding to patients' suggested improvements. Being part of the HPF e-group is a way of providing a voice to patients and can help improve the service for everyone at Hollies.

## Finding your voice: Joining the Hollies Patient Forum Steering

I am a relatively new member of the Group and have attended three meetings. My time has been spent gathering information rather than offering input, but that will now change as I have a much better overview of how the practice works. Starting in a new group can be daunting, but the forum is very welcoming, and there is no pressure to suddenly start having an input.

As patients of the practice, we all need a voice to help the practice move forward in challenging times, and I believe the Hollies Patient Forum Steering Group offers an opportunity for that. I see my role as a critical friend; I have been able to learn how the practice operates and can offer insight as a patient into how best we can work together in a climate of strained resources and increased demand.

Do consider if you would like to be part of the forum – it is not arduous, and you don't need special expertise; everyone's opinion counts and deserves consideration. The forum needs to have a variety of thoughts and opinions. You learn a lot, and it is good to put something back into the Hollies in terms of new ways of looking at the working practices and operations.

Lydia Wells

I joined the Group in 2022, but I still see myself as a newbie! I was surprised how quickly I was able to become involved and contribute to discussions with other members and the Hollies staff, who were refreshingly open to new ideas and sharing information with us to give feedback to other patients.

I've always been keen to promote the idea that groups such as the Hollies Patient Forum work in partnership with practices rather than in opposition. Patients nowadays have a much larger role in decision-making around their care and treatment, and what the patient forum offers is an important line of communication between patients and practice. Hollies is a relatively large practice (10,600 patients), so it's vital that the staff appreciate the patient view and hear our suggestions for improvements and that patients have better insights into how the practice works and what's being done to serve the health needs of thousands of people. Patient forums offer a powerful mechanism to achieve both goals and generate real change.

So, like Lydia, I would strongly recommend you think about being part of the Forum – either on the steering group (of around eight people) or the e-group (which currently has around 80 people). You could have a real impact, and you'd have a much deeper understanding of the Hollies specifically and primary care in general.

Ian Hodgson

## Before GP Appointments

Older readers will remember that until the 1980s, you did not need an appointment to see your GP. So-called 'Open Surgeries' typically operated twice each day, morning and early evening. You turned up, gave your name, asked for the GP you wanted to see, and waited. In NHS hospitals, demand has always outstripped supply, a situation managed by now well-publicised 'waiting lists'. Demand in General Practice was managed in 'waiting rooms', but everyone who booked in was seen in the same session.

Appointments were introduced from the 1970s. Why? Patients complained of the 'interminable waits' of an hour to see the doctor! The seating was usually uncomfortable, the selection of magazines strange, and *Reader's Digests* ancient. GPs felt they were unable to work effectively and efficiently under pressure to clear the waiting room each session. However, there was some resistance to appointments amongst GPs, as they eroded the ideal of the 'family doctor' and were then associated with dentists and hairdressers! Also, GPs had to appoint and pay extra staff to deal with the phones and time management. Appointments favoured the middle classes, who had access to phones and confidence in dealing with administrators. The working class and poor, without phones and inexperienced with clerical dealings, were disadvantaged.

Appointments took time to bed in. For GPs, there was better control of workflow but Did Not Attends (DNAs) wasted their time. Ever more administrative staff were needed, and receptionists, in particular, had a difficult role. Patients found that waits of an hour had turned into days, and many felt that something socially important had been lost. Seeing the GP became like using other public services. One commentator recently wrote: 'The transformation of time in general practice therefore had extensive everyday repercussions. As yearnings for traditional 'family doctors' and the 'camaraderie' of the open surgery suggested, vocal, often socially conservative commentators and patients began to relate to general practice as ever more impersonal and remote.' (Martin D. Moore)

For more on the transformation of 'waiting' see Martin Moore's website on Waiting Times: <https://waitingtimes.exeter.ac.uk>

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## Get in touch

We want to encourage participation in the Newsletter. If you have comments or contributions, please email to [newsletterhpf@gmail.com](mailto:newsletterhpf@gmail.com)

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