

**Access to GP Appointments Task and Finish Review Group.**

**Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 12noon, in Committee Room 3.**

**Present: - Councillor Newall (in the Chair); Councillors Donoghue, Francis, Macnab, T. Richmond, S. Richmond and J. Taylor.**

**Abbie Metcalfe, Democratic Officer.**

**Board Members from Healthwatch.**

**Apologies: - Councillor H. Scott.**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations reported to the meeting.

**2. Feedback from Healthwatch**

Councillor Newall provided a brief overview of the work members had undertaken so far in relation to access to GP appointments and members visiting individual GP Practices. The Chair advised that Members wanted to avoid duplication and were trying to join up this Scrutiny Committees work with the work being undertaken by Jenny Chapman MP and HealthWatch

The Chair of Healthwatch reported that a survey had been launched on survey monkey and one of the elements included a series of questions in relation accessing GP appointments. It was very early days but so far the responses had been positive. Initial observations included:-

- People experiencing difficulties getting through to the GP Practice at 8am;
- Carmel GP Practice has capped the number of patients to enable them to better manage the number of patients they already have;
- Why don't all GP Practices offer online booking facilities?
- Some GP Practices send text reminders for appointments, why don't all Practices?
- Orchard Court asks all staff to answer the telephone at 8am, why don't all Practices?
- Access to GP appointments doesn't appear to be an issue for smaller rural Practices; and
- Choose Well Campaign needs more awareness rising.

Members noted that the overarching theme appeared to be uniformity and patients frustrations that all GP Practices seem to operate differently. Members acknowledged there was the need for a huge education campaign about appropriate use of GP appointments and thought that the Choose Well Campaign worked well.

Councillor Taylor added that she would be attending the Practice Managers meeting in October alongside Councillor S. Richmond and would raise the issue of uniformity with them. Members also noted that individual Practices were trying hard to manage GP appointments and patients were generally satisfied the service received from their GP Practices.

Discussion ensued about Communications and whether the bottom of the prescriptions could be better utilised to advertise alternative ways of managing conditions rather than visiting the Surgery. Members discussed talking to the Public Health Team and sharing the messages about keeping healthy and a variety of methods to communicate to the public.

Agreed –

a) That the Healthwatch Board Members be thanked for their attendance at the meeting; and

b) That Members continue to receive updates from the survey to feed into their work.

### **Feedback from GP Practice Managers meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013 – Cllrs S. Richmond and J. Taylor**

- GP Practices operate as a business and are in competition with Pharmacies and expressed concerns about some services being duplicated;
- Patients need to be encouraged to take more responsibility for their own health;
- Concerns were expressed about Pharmacies administering flu jabs and the potential of elderly patients being confused and the possibility of them receiving a double dose;
- There is no general budget for communication and engagement, individual Practices would need to pay for advertising messages;
- Whether there was a role for Members within the Practice Patient Participation Groups; and
- Do Not Attends is a real issue and it was highlighted that one Practice has a dedicated phone line for patients to ring to cancel appointments.