

# The PPG Handbook

## Contents

Introduction .....	2
The Primary Care Landscape .....	2
More on Primary Care Networks (PCNs) .....	3
What is a PPG.....	4
Where to start.....	5
Accessible Information Standard.....	6
Increasing membership .....	7
Things PPGs can do .....	9
Additional support .....	10





## Introduction

*This PPG Handbook has been designed for PPG members to support their work with GP Practices. The document contains hyperlinks to further information throughout, where you see [highlighted text](#) please click on these for further information.*

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a group of people that are patients of the GP practice who want to help it work as well as it can for patients, doctors, and staff. The most successful PPGs are built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect between the PPG members and the NHS professionals they work with.

PPG members are volunteers who give up their time to work with healthcare professionals with the aim of improving services for the practice population and wider community.

Since April 2015, it has been a contractual requirement of NHS England for all GP practices to have a PPG and to make reasonable efforts for this to be representative of the practice population.

## The Primary Care Landscape

Primary care services provide the first point of contact in the healthcare system, acting as the ‘front door’ of the NHS. Primary care includes general practice, community pharmacy, dental, and optometry (eye health) services. As a PPG member you will be linked to the general practice (GP) element of primary care.

Since the NHS was created in 1948, the population has grown, and people are living longer. Many people are living with long term conditions such as diabetes and heart disease or suffer with mental health issues and may need to access their local health services more often. To meet these needs, practices have begun working together in Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and with [local communities](#).

In addition to PCNs Surrey Heartlands has four [Place-based partnerships](#) or “Alliances” – Guildford and Waverley; East Surrey; North West Surrey; and Surrey Downs. These bring together health, local government, the voluntary, community and charity sector with wider partners across local populations of around 250,000 – 300,000, using local knowledge and relationships to reduce health inequalities and



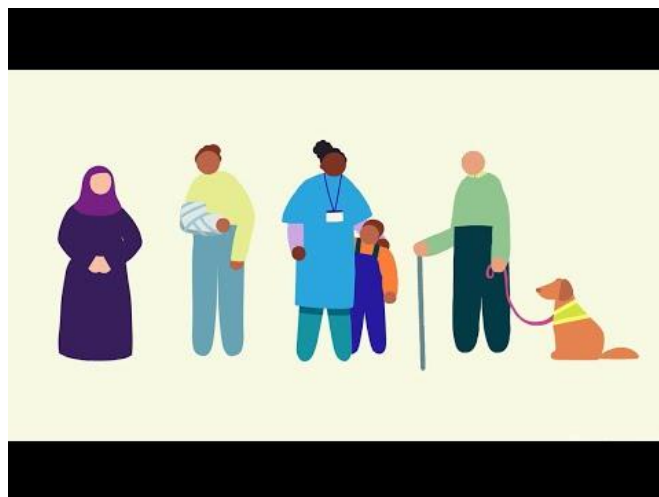
support delivery of local services across these smaller geographical footprints. You can find out more about Place-based partnerships in the Kings Fund video below.

## More on Primary Care Networks (PCNs)

PCNs build on the core of current primary care services and enable greater provision of proactive, personalised, coordinated and more integrated health and social care. Clinicians describe this as a change from reactively providing appointments to proactively caring for the people and communities they serve. Where emerging primary care networks are in place in parts of the country, there are clear benefits for patients and clinicians.

Primary care networks are based on GP registered lists, typically serving natural communities of around 30,000 to 50,000. They should be small enough to provide the personal care valued by both patients and GPs, but large enough to have impact and economies of scale through better collaboration between practices and others in the local health and social care system. You can find out more about Surrey Heartlands PCNs [here](#).

As part of their duty to engage with people and communities, Primary Care Networks should engage with PPGs as part of their work at neighbourhood level with local communities, to understand local needs and reduce health inequalities.



Further free training on the [Health System in England is available here](#).



## What is a PPG

Every PPG is unique, based on the relationship with practice staff and evolving to meet local needs. Historically, PPGs have been very GP-centric, mainly focusing on the internal functions within the practice and how that relates to its patient population, with members working in partnership with their practices to offer the patient perspective on the services that are provided. PPGs also work to improve communication, encourage patients to take more responsibility for their health and provide practical support.

Following The Health and Care Act 2022, the NHS has a new 'triple aim' duty that requires the majority of NHS services to have regard to 'all likely effects' of their decisions in relation to three areas:

1. health and wellbeing for people, including its effects in relation to inequalities
2. quality of health services for all individuals, including the effects of inequalities in relation to the benefits that people can obtain from those services
3. the sustainable use of NHS resources.

Effective working with people and communities is essential to delivering this triple aim and PPGs can play a significant role in supporting the NHS achieve this aim but not only supporting the practice but also working with their local community.





## Where to start

The first goal for establishing a successful PPG, should be creating a shared understanding of the purpose and role of the PPG with the practice. This can be supported by a clear terms of reference and role descriptions for PPG members should help PPG members and practice staff to explain why the PPG exists and what it does. Please click [here](#) for an example Terms of Reference for a PPG

There are no “must do’s” for PPGs, a format that works for many PPG & practice partners is for the PPG and practice to create mutual objectives together based on what would be most beneficial for the practice, the patients and the local community.



Ways that the PPG can support the practice:

- Support the GP Practice to deliver accessible services and improve patient experiences
- Offer feedback on the patient population perspective
- Assist practices to make the most effective use of their resources
- Improve communication with the local community
- Help to promote good health
- Help promote community health and wellbeing, including things that actively create good health (“health creation”)
- Help reduce inequalities in the local community



- Influence decisions about health and care services as the patient voice
- Offer practical support to the practice

## Accessible Information Standard

The [Accessible Information Standard \(AIS\)](#) imposes specific statutory guidance which applies to, health service and adult social care providers. Commissioners of health and care services must also support service providers to be compliant with the Accessible Information Standard.

All PPGs should be designed with inclusivity in mind and follow the basic principles of accessible communication by considering the following:

- Ask people what they need and make reasonable adjustments accordingly.
- Communicate with people in a way that they can understand.
- Use accessible buildings where possible and ensure events are fully accessible.
- Take account of different user needs to ensure everyone has equal access.
- Enable all PPG members have the opportunity to engage with the PPG in a fully inclusive manner.

*Note that some disabilities that affect communication are not visible and not everyone will have a formal diagnosis. Ask your Practice Manager how to create accessible materials for your PPG such as Easy Read or braille.*

## How should the PPG be structured?

It is important that a PPG is not too rigid in its structure. A PPG may be virtual or face-to-face, or a combination of the two. Although there are no prescriptive requirements surrounding structure, the most effective groups have ensured that they adopt certain criteria including:

- The appointment of a Chair and Secretary/coordinator
- There are clear terms of reference which includes a clear decision-making process
- Set clear and concise agendas for each meeting with good prior communication before the meeting date
- Evidence of regular meetings are maintained and documented



- Members are recruited from all ages/groups
- Evidence that patient feedback has been recorded, discussed and where possible acted upon
- There are training opportunities for members to help equip members with the skills and confidence to fully participate in the PPG
- There is an action plan



[Use this Toolkit](#) provided by The Patients Association as a practical guide.

## Increasing membership

A PPG will benefit from being as representative of the patient population as possible. There are many [guides available](#) with advice about how to increase recruitment, but the key is to get out there and ask people to join. With a clear idea of how your PPG will work and what it will try to do, you can promote your PPG to the patient list and local community.

Here's some ideas on seeking new members:

- Use your patient demographic data as a starting point to understand which areas may need more time and focus as part of the recruitment process.
- Work with your local Healthwatch Surrey representative.
- Tailor your recruitment to the demographics you are seeking, consider language barriers, easy-read, different media formats



- Work with local community leaders to reach patients who may not be already engaged in health conversations.
- Attend local groups.
- Ask your local councillor or [Community Link Officer](#) for support.
- Work with other practices in your Primary Care Network to take a collaborative approach to external communications for recruiting PPG members.
- Utilise local community resources to reach more people.
- Host an open event for people to learn about the PPG and the practice.
- Consider using social media to reach local virtual groups.
- Set up posters and leaflets within the practice.

Don't be afraid to think differently and take new approaches that may be better suited to your community.



### **A point on inequality:**

It can be easy to think a group is representative because it reflects what we believe to be our community, but we encourage you to push yourself to think who in the community are we not hearing from, who could be experiencing deprivation and may need support to actively take part.

Equity is everyone's business and removing barriers to engaging is a key factor for public services.





**Takeaway point:** Having a representative from the practice staff and a GP where possible working with the PPG is key.

## Things PPGs can do

Each PPG will work different to some extent, and this depends entirely on local needs, but they all have the aim of making sure that their practice puts the patient and improving health at the centre of everything it does.

Surrey Heartlands PPG success:

*“The PPG chair posts on local Facebook groups with clearly marked messages about “Surgery Updates” “Vaccination Updates”. This was particularly useful when the surgery had a major covid outbreak! Many people have said how useful and re-assuring it was to have information like that.”* Springfield Surgery

*“We have supported the Flu Clinics – Marshalling car park and queue. Taking Temperatures. Asking the Covid questions, some members have also supported Covid Clinics. The PPG Chair monitored National, Regional and Local sources of relevant information and circulated these as appropriate and wrote a piece for the local June edition of the Runnymede News magazine. Our PPG also liaises with the Chairs of the other two PPGs in our PCN – Chertsey and Ottershaw.”* Crouch Oak Surgery

What does an engaged PPG look like?

- Members acting as health and wellbeing ambassadors within the community
- Support the practice create plain English communication about health and care for their patient population
- Being outward facing to learn about innovations which are happening in the local community and bring these back to the practice
- Helping to promote health initiatives within the practice and community
- Working alongside the practice and local health commissioners to ensure that the right services are available to the local population
- Giving patients and practice staff the opportunity to meet and discuss topics of mutual interest as well as working through challenges and creating opportunities together



- Offering a means for patients to become involved and make suggestions about the healthcare services they receive
- Exploring issues from patient complaints and patient surveys, contribute to actions plans and help monitor improvements.
- Contributing feedback to the practice on National Patient Survey results and Friends and Family Test feedback to propose developments or change
- supporting the practice in promoting health awareness and patient education.

PPGs can do much more than just support the practice, they can act as a community resource too. Some PPGs have [set up a charity](#) to raise funds for the practice and local community.

PPGs are well placed to support in raising awareness around [social prescribing](#) and [green prescribing](#) in their patient population and local community.

***To note:** If a patient is seeking to resolve a complaint or issue with their individual care via a PPG it is important to redirect them to the correct process with the practice for this. This protects their confidential patient information and ensures their issue will be handled by the correct person involved in their care. Please check with your practice manager on the process in your practice.*

## Additional support

Surrey Heartlands can offer extra support and guidance to your PPG where necessary. If you have read this handbook and would like some 1:1 support please contact [syheartlandsicb.engagement@nhs.net](mailto:syheartlandsicb.engagement@nhs.net)

**A final thought:** Volunteers are crucial to the NHS's vision for the future of health and social care, as a PPG member you play a vital role in supporting the NHS achieve this vision. Thank you for the time and energy you invest into your role as a PPG member.

Created 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022