

A large, vibrant green leaf is the central focus, with its veins clearly visible. The leaf is set against a white background. A solid red horizontal banner is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the main title in white text. Below the banner, the leaf continues downwards, and the subtitle is written in white text on the green surface of the leaf.

Growing Patient Participation

**Communications toolkit for
Patient Participation Groups**

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1. What is this toolkit for?

This communications toolkit has been prepared as part of the *Growing Patient Participation* campaign, which aims to support the work of Patient Participation Groups (PPGs), and to encourage the creation of more groups in practices across the country. It is designed as a practical resource to help you in your work to engage with the local community, publicise your successes, and act as an ambassador for PPGs.

The toolkit provides ideas, advice and practical tips to help you in communicating with the wider community, and examples of how other PPGs have gone about recruiting new members, planning and delivering local initiatives, supporting other local PPGs and working with their Primary Care Trust (PCT) or Local Involvement Network (LINK). The toolkit also contains a range of template resources to aid your communications activity, including a press release, and website and newsletter copy.

In addition to this toolkit, you can regularly receive further tips and advice, and hear about the work of other PPGs by signing up to our *Campaign Update* email. You can register to receive the *Update* through the *Growing Patient Participation* website, **www.growingppgs.com**.

2. What is the *Growing Patient Participation* campaign?

Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) are an important and established means of helping general practices to be responsive to the needs of their community, and to continuously improve the delivery of health services locally.

Despite the great work being done, there is still scope for many more practices to set up a PPG and start reaping the benefits they can bring – currently only 41% of practices have established active groups.

That's why the National Association for Patient Participation (NAPP), NHS Alliance, British Medical Association (BMA) and Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) have come together, supported by the Department of Health, to launch a national campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of patient participation, to encourage more widespread involvement, and to support practices and patients in setting up a PPG. The ultimate aim is to see more patients and practices benefiting from PPGs.

We are also keen to support the work of existing PPGs as part of the campaign, and to gain your support in encouraging more practices and patients to set up a group.

To find out more about the campaign visit www.growingppgs.com.

3. Growing your PPG

Recruiting new members is frequently raised as one of the most challenging aspects of running a Patient Participation Group (PPG) – in particular, ensuring that the group represents the diversity of the local community and reflects a range of views.

This section includes tips on addressing this issue, as well as some examples of how other PPGs have successfully recruited new members, both old and young, to their group.

Alongside recruiting new members, it can also be a challenge to maintain momentum among existing members. This section also provides hints, tips and case studies to inspire you to consider setting up new initiatives with your practice, to continue expanding the scope of your work, and to keep members active and engaged.

Every PPG is different, and there's real variety out there in the types of activities being undertaken. Not all the initiatives outlined in this section of the toolkit will be easily applicable to your local circumstances or the local population you serve, but hopefully they will provide some useful food for thought.

a. Planning for communications activity

The following sections of the toolkit provide a range of ideas and suggestions on communications activity you may want to undertake to publicise the positive action you have taken, to draw in new members, to maintain momentum and to act as a champion for PPGs more widely.

To carry out any communications activity effectively, planning is key. Below is a checklist of areas to consider before undertaking communications work.

- **Put it on the agenda** – dedicate some time at an upcoming meeting to consider what you would like to get out of communications activity. You may have one, two or even more aims, but it is vital that the whole group is clear on what those aims are at the outset, whether they are simply to draw in new members, to increase attendance at PPG-run events, or to raise awareness of the PPG and draw in support from other local organisations. This will help you to choose the right types of activities that suit your needs and capabilities.
- **Appoint a lead** – undoubtedly you will need input from a number of members of the group; however, as with any activity you undertake, it will be important to appoint a 'communications lead' to oversee any communications work, co-ordinate all preparatory work and ensure that it is meeting the desired goals.
- **Get the right support in place** – consider what resources you will need in advance, and what skills you may be able to draw in to provide support. For example, if you are running an event, you may want to create leaflets or flyers to give out to attendees, as well as a press release to send to local media in advance. This toolkit includes a range of pointers and practical resources to help you with this, but it is also worth putting out a call for individuals with relevant skills who could lend a hand. For example, you could put a notice up at the surgery reception, or get

the PPG members to put a request out to their friends and family, asking whether anyone has any experience with the media, or in designing posters etc.

- **Get the timing right** – if you are planning, for example, to contact your local newspaper with a call for new members, consider the best timing for this. Doing it a week or two in advance of the next meeting will provide a clear call to action for those who read the article, and time to make arrangements to attend. The time of year may also provide a useful ‘hook’, for example, tapping into the Christmas ‘spirit of giving’.
- **Be accessible** – any proactive work you do to raise awareness of the PPG among the local community, other practices and PPGs, or the local media, is likely to elicit a response. Communication is rarely one way, and you need to be prepared to receive and respond to any questions or requests that come in on the back of your activity. It is worth considering:
 - Who will be the point(s) of contact and how will they be reached?
Is there a member of the PPG who is happy to share their email address or phone number, or would the practice be happy to field queries in the first instance?
Whatever you decide, these contact details should be prominently displayed on any materials you hand out or information you send to the media.
 - What resources can you direct people to? Do you need to include any additional information on the practice website, or the PPG site if you have one?

The National Association for Patient Participation (NAPP) – the umbrella organisation for PPGs within primary care – is currently looking into how it could offer all PPGs who want one a dedicated web page, hosted through the NAPP website. To find out more about NAPP and the range of support it offers to PPGs, visit www.napp.org.uk. To keep up to date on this initiative, and all other resources being made available as part of the *Growing Patient Participation* campaign, sign up to receive our regular *Campaign Updates* at www.growingppgs.com.

b. Publicising your PPG and drawing in new members

There are a number of ways to attract new members to your PPG, and to raise awareness of your work among the wider community, including other local organisations with an interest in health. Four effective and tried and tested ways of going about it are:

- creating posters and leaflets to publicise the PPG within the practice;
- holding an open evening or event where prospective members can find out about what the group does and how it works;
- targeting specific individuals to invite to become part of the group; and
- publicising the group and calling for members through local media.

1. Creating PPG ‘collateral’ – Eye-catching and informative posters and leaflets, placed in the surgery waiting room, on the reception desk, or even in the consulting room, can be a good way of alerting patients to the work of the PPG. Posters could be a simple call to action to get involved, or an alert to the date of the next meeting, and leaflets could contain information on some of the PPG’s recent successes.

As with all posters and leaflets, people don't necessarily recall the details the first time they see them. The more times they see them, the more they take in, building from recognition to awareness, understanding and, hopefully, action. It doesn't need to look flashy or expensive, but consistency in the 'look and feel' of anything you produce will help build that familiarity among patients.

Creating posters and leaflets – five top tips

- Create a 'brand' for your PPG. It doesn't need to be flashy, but a simple logo to sit on all posters or leaflets you produce will help build recognition.
- Keep it simple. Don't be tempted to cram in as much information as possible. The fewer words you use the better – consider what information you want people to take away with them at a glance.
- Make the call to action clear. Whether it is to attend an event, visit the website, or join the PPG, it should be made as prominent as possible.
- Ensure people know where to go next. Contact details for more information should always be included.
- Consider the life span of your material. If it's going to be sitting on the waiting room wall for several months, don't include any information that will quickly become out of date.

2. Open evenings – Open evenings or other events such as coffee mornings, held at the practice or another local venue, are an ideal way to invite people to learn more about the work of the PPG. It is always advisable to give patients plenty of advance notice, and to ask people to confirm their attendance (either via the practice or an agreed email address) so you can gauge the likely turnout.

Offering an incentive (a surgery tour or free refreshments) can help boost numbers, and it will be important to showcase some of the successes achieved by the PPG, as well as any upcoming plans to make improvements for patients, in order to gain patients' interest in getting involved.

To help target the less frequent visitors to the surgery, as well as those who visit on a regular basis, try to spread the word as far and wide as possible using some or all of the following tools. This will also help to ensure you are recruiting members who reflect the needs of the whole of the patient population:

- Distribute posters/flyers in the waiting room and around the local area (eg libraries, church halls, local chemist).
- Flag the details of the event on the electronic message board, if your practice has one.
- Include a note about the event at the bottom of prescription or appointment booking slips.
- Ask practice staff to mention it to patients attending appointments, and get PPG members to tell their friends.
- Feature an article or advert in the practice newsletter or on the practice website.
- Provide an article for inclusion in the local newspaper, parish or council newsletter (see [section 4a](#) for further guidance on targeting local media).

- Find out about other local community groups, such as mother and toddler groups or local charities, and contact them about the event. The practice staff should be aware of what local groups exist, and by getting in touch with the local council (or looking on their website), you will be able to identify council-run groups.

Establishing your PPG in the community

Linking in with other groups and organisations within the local community will not only help to build the profile of the PPG, it could help to draw in a range of new members and support for your work. It may also open up new channels for funding and joint working to achieve mutual aims. Some of the local organisations and individuals you could think about approaching include:

- Primary Care Trust ([see section 4c](#));
- Local Involvement Network ([see section 4d](#));
- local practice-based commissioning consortia;
- Local Medical Committees;
- local charities/local representatives of national charities;
- local MP and leader of the local council;
- local religious leaders;
- local Chambers of Commerce;
- housing associations;
- The Women's Institute;
- local Citizens Advice Bureau and Connexions representatives; and
- Local mother and baby groups, eg local La Leche League.

A direct phone call and discussion about setting up or attending a meeting will be appropriate with some of the above list; for others, consider sending out a copy of your latest newsletter with a covering note, to give them an overview of your achievements.

3. Inviting individuals – If your aim is to increase the diversity of your group, to represent a wider cross-section of the local population, or to gain input from individuals with a particular health issue, personal invitations could be the best option.

The simplest way to do this is by briefing the GPs and practice nurses on the types of individuals you are hoping to attract to join the PPG – whether it is new mothers, carers, younger people or individuals from minority groups for example – then prompting them to speak to those patients about the PPG during one-to-one consultations. PPGs that have already tried out this technique have found that individuals are more likely to want to get involved if they feel they have been hand-picked. Template text for an 'invitation', which GPs can hand out to chosen patients, is included in [section 5c](#) below.

4. Publicising the PPG – Regularly showcasing the work of the PPG to practice staff and the wider patient population is important in demonstrating its value and drawing interest from prospective new members. Equally, it can be a good way of ensuring the PCT is aware of the work being done, and inspiring those in neighbouring practices to set up a group (this is covered in more detail in [section 4](#) of the toolkit).

The most tried and tested options for highlighting PPG successes are:

- online – featuring updates and case studies of your work on the practice website, as well as on the PPG site, if you have one;
- in the surgery – surgery notice boards can be crowded, but an eye-catching photo of a recent event, for example, with an explanation of what you did and how to find out more, can be an effective way of informing other patients, particularly if placed at reception, or even in the consulting room;

Sheila Rodgers, who is a member of Daybrook PPG at the Daybrook Health Clinic in Nottingham, says her group used a health promotion day, which aimed to raise awareness of ways to tackle obesity, the harms associated with smoking, and the importance of more efficient medicine management, as an opportunity to host a Marie Curie tea party. As well as raising money for the charity, the group used the event as a chance to speak to patients about the purpose and benefits of the PPG, with a view to recruiting new members.

The Patient Participation Group at The Bute Practice, Rothesay, Scotland, known as 'Hear for Patients', recently gained coverage in the local paper, The Buteman. The paper covered the group's desire to recruit new members under the headline 'Patient group seeks new faces', and featured a short profile of why the PPG was set up, how it works, and its aims and achievements to date.

- face to face – holding regular PPG 'surgeries' – with one or more members of the group setting up an area in the waiting room during surgery hours – can be a great way of giving patients the opportunity to informally ask questions and find out more about their PPG, while waiting to see the GP or practice nurse;
- through a newsletter – many PPGs already have a regular newsletter which they use to publicise both successes and upcoming initiatives from which the local community can benefit. A newsletter can also be a good vehicle for publicising membership recruitment drives, and can be made available in the waiting room and also on the practice website. The NAPP website includes examples of newsletters produced by a range of PPGs – to view them, visit www.napporg.uk/resources/ppg-newsletters;
- in local media – local papers, parish and council magazines can be a great way of publicising the PPG to the wider community, whether it is a straight call for new members, publicity for an upcoming event, or an opportunity to highlight a successful initiative. See [section 4a](#) for guidance on working with local media.

*In September 2009, the **Wincanton PPG** at the **Wincanton Health Centre** in Somerset gained coverage in the local **Blackmore Vale Magazine** for its upcoming event on dementia, the first in a series of 'information evenings' aimed at providing the local community with advice and guidance on a range of health issues.*

c. Hints and tips on expanding the scope of your PPG

There are lots of worthwhile activities that PPGs can undertake to support the work of their practice, to ensure local services match the needs of the community, and to get involved in shaping the way services are delivered. Working with your Practice Manager and other practice staff, you will be best placed to decide local priorities and what initiatives are likely to offer the greatest benefit to the local population.

If you are interested in hearing more about the work of other PPGs, and gathering ideas for future initiatives, visit the case studies section of the *Growing Patient Participation* campaign website, **www.growingppgs.com**. In the meantime, below are some areas of activity to consider. Undertaking new initiatives and constantly looking for new ways to support the work of the practice will not only help in expanding the scope of your PPG, but will also help keep it fresh, and keep members keen, engaged and interested.

1. Beef up your online presence – A good, informative website can be a great way of connecting the PPG and the practice to the local population, particularly younger patients who are harder to reach through channels such as local media. Whether you are setting up a dedicated website for the PPG, creating additional PPG information for the practice site, or even working with the practice to set up or improve their website, consider what information will be most useful for patients. This could include details of practice services, information on common illnesses, and updates on PPG-run events and initiatives. It is important to keep the information regularly updated.

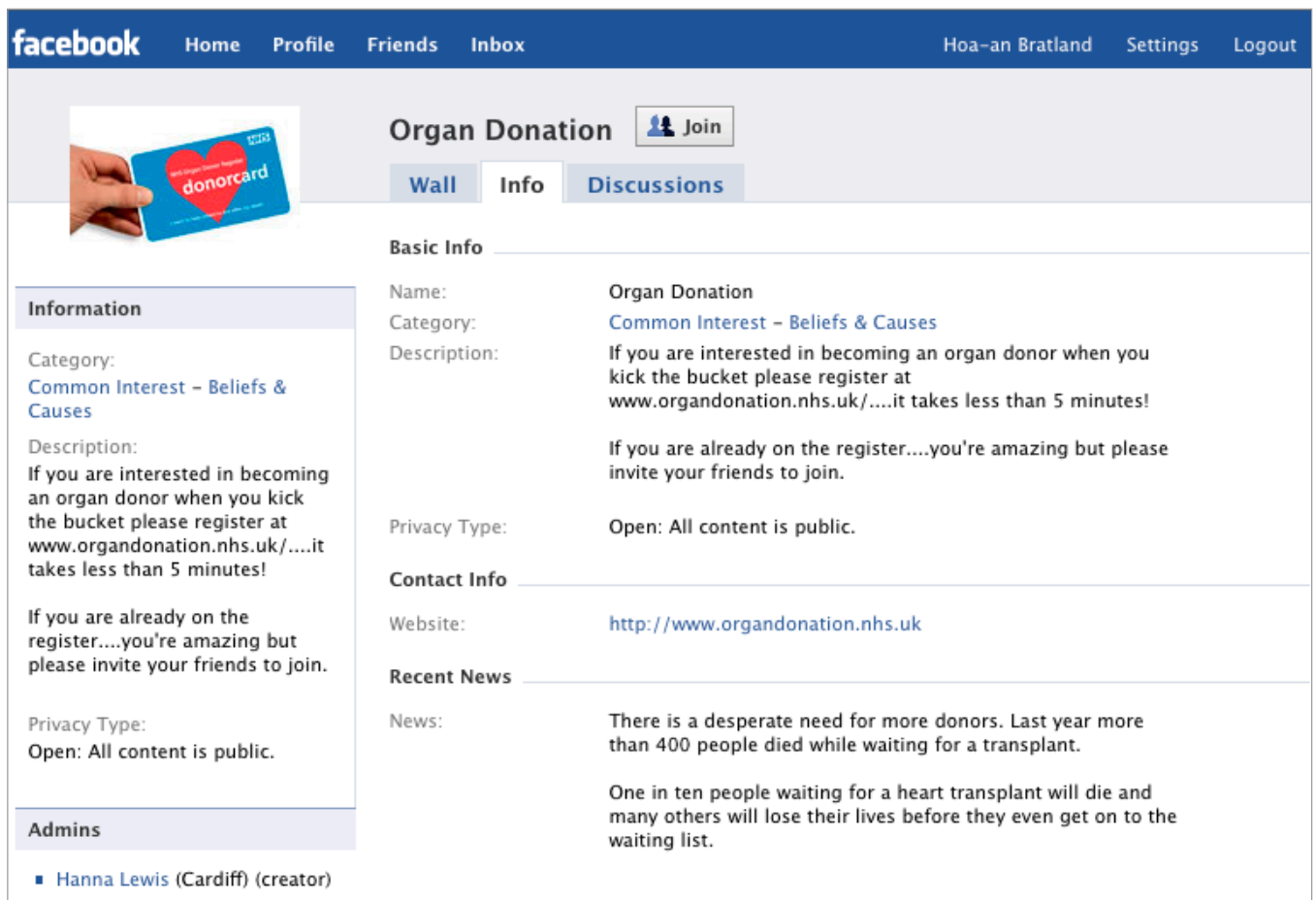
And it needn't be a costly job – try putting a call out to PPG members and other patients to see if anyone has relevant skills they could offer.

*The **Davenport House PPG** in Harpenden has been working to update its website, to make it more useful and interactive for patients. The aim of the new site, which is scheduled for launch by Christmas 2009, is to provide both those already signed up to the PPG membership scheme, and the wider patient population, with a range of useful, relevant and regularly updated information on the work of the PPG and practice, as well as wider health issues of interest to the community.*

One specific objective for the PPG is to make the website a better resource for two-way communication with patients. Alongside information on the practice and PPG, upcoming education events, and the PPG newsletter, the new site will also feature a 'Have your say' section, which will allow registered members to post their comments and questions on a series of topical health issues. A summary of each online discussion will be created to feature on the site and in the newsletter.

The more interactive you are online, the more you will be able to engage with the local community. If you have someone within the PPG who could take responsibility for running your online activity, you could also try providing updates on the practice and PPG initiatives through social networking sites such as facebook (www.facebook.com) or twitter (www.twitter.com).

facebook is a social utility site that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. Individuals and organisations can sign up free of charge and create a facebook 'page', on which they can post 'status updates', comments and photos, and through which they can send messages to others. They are able to gather friends who can view updates to their page. In addition, individuals can set up facebook groups, as illustrated below, which can be joined by anyone else on the site. You can encourage patients who are on facebook to add the PPG as a 'friend', to keep up to date on its status and activities.



The screenshot shows a Facebook page for a group named "Organ Donation". The page is set to "Open: All content is public" and has a website link to <http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk>. The page description encourages organ donation registration, stating it takes less than 5 minutes. A recent news post mentions a desperate need for more donors, with 400 people dying while waiting for a transplant in the previous year.

facebook Home Profile Friends Inbox Hoa-an Bratland Settings Logout

Organ Donation [Join](#)

Wall Info Discussions

Information

Category: [Common Interest - Beliefs & Causes](#)

Description: If you are interested in becoming an organ donor when you kick the bucket please register at www.organdonation.nhs.uk/....it takes less than 5 minutes!

If you are already on the register....you're amazing but please invite your friends to join.

Privacy Type: Open: All content is public.

Admins

- Hanna Lewis (Cardiff) (creator)

Basic Info

Name: Organ Donation

Category: [Common Interest - Beliefs & Causes](#)

Description: If you are interested in becoming an organ donor when you kick the bucket please register at www.organdonation.nhs.uk/....it takes less than 5 minutes!

If you are already on the register....you're amazing but please invite your friends to join.

Privacy Type: Open: All content is public.

Contact Info

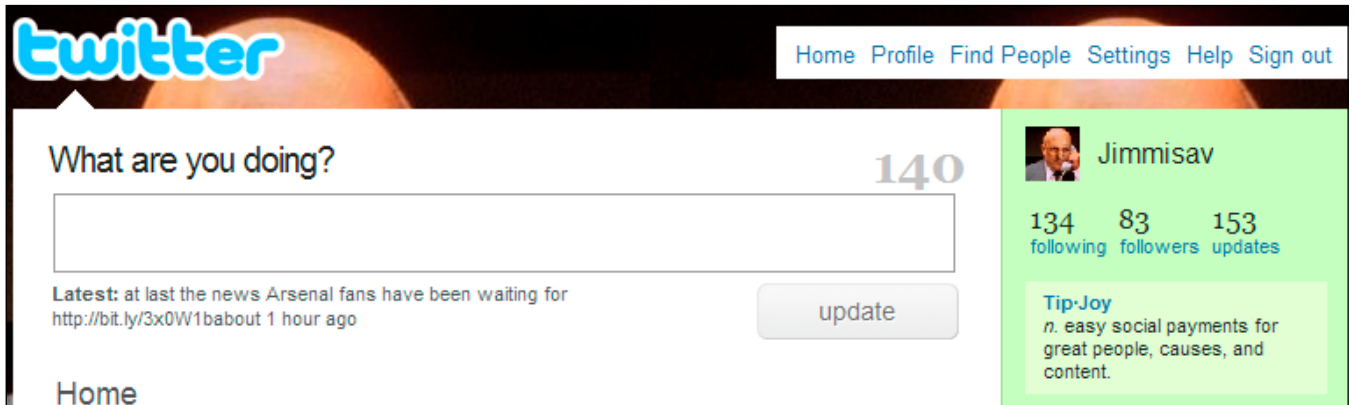
Website: <http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk>

Recent News

News: There is a desperate need for more donors. Last year more than 400 people died while waiting for a transplant.

One in ten people waiting for a heart transplant will die and many others will lose their lives before they even get on to the waiting list.

twitter is a social networking and 'micro-blogging' service that allows users to send and read other users' short updates – of no more than 140 characters – known as 'tweets'. Individuals can 'follow' your twitter 'feed' in order to be alerted every time you 'tweet'. By asking patients to become followers of the practice or PPG twitter feed, they can be kept up to date on your activity. For example, if you have an event coming up, you can issue a tweet calling for people to attend.



Having a facebook and/or twitter presence is also a good way of keeping the PCT, other practices and local media (who regularly use these as tools to gather stories) up to date on your activities. There may also be individuals locally who have a blog (short for 'web log' – a type of online 'diary', maintained by an individual or organisation, with regular entries on a specific subject or range of topics) on which they discuss local services and facilities, who could follow your activities online and spread the word on your behalf.

For further information and advice on undertaking activity online, contact NAPP at **audrey.hoggard@napp.org.uk**.

Creating online content – five top tips

When creating text for use online – whether it is for your own website, or for use on another site – follow these five golden rules:

- Keep it short – the more snappy you can be in making your point the better (people can have very short attention spans when browsing online!)
- Keep it informal – the language you use online should be informal and 'chatty', to draw people in and make it more appealing to read.
- Break up the text – a few relevant and well-placed images can make a web page much more inviting. Use photos taken at a recent event, for example, or you will soon be able to access a bank of images on **www.growingppgs.com** – sign up to our *Campaign Updates* for more news.
- Keep it real – balance text about the aims and purpose of the group with tangible examples of activity you've already undertaken or have coming up.
- Make it easy to use – think about how you're signposting information, and how easy it is to find (particularly contact details). Test it out with a friend or family member to make sure it's as easy to use and understand as possible.

The Patient Participation Group at **Whaddon House Surgery** in Bletchley was one of the first to be set up in Milton Keynes. A number of really positive changes have been put in place as a result of its regular meetings, including the setting up of a website, www.whaddonhousesurgery.co.uk, which provides information on the practice including services available and the work of the PPG, updates on national issues such as swine flu, and advice and guidance on a range of health issues. It also includes a facility to allow patients to request repeat prescriptions online, cancel appointments and update the practice on changes to their personal details.



2. Think big – You don't need to stop at running initiatives and prompting service improvements just within your practice. If you have ideas on how local services can be improved more widely – for example, the setting up of a specialist diabetes clinic, or specialist out-of-hours care for those with respiratory diseases – get in contact with your local Primary Care Trust (for more information on working with your PCT, see [section 4c](#) of the toolkit).

If neighbouring GP surgeries also have a PPG, consider linking up with them to run joint initiatives across the wider community. Similarly, don't limit yourself to trying to reach patients within the surgery environment. It could be worth approaching local pharmacists to gain their support for initiatives; for example, getting them to hand out leaflets or invitations to their customers, or using the pharmacy as a venue for health information events or running free health checks.

Ros Carpenter, liaison officer and founding member of Coppice Surgery and Angmering Medical Centre Patient Participation Group in West Sussex, says that one of the group's main roles is to help evaluate and feed back to the surgery the findings of the annual patient survey, and to make recommendations aimed at improving the patient experience. For example, the group has helped introduce a private reception desk for those who require a little more privacy when making and attending appointments.

3. Provide all-round support – Many PPGs have found that there is a real appetite among the local community for services that provide social, rather than medical, support. For example, you could consider setting up bereavement support services for those who have just lost a family member or friend. Setting up support for carers of those with long-term medical conditions can also be very welcome, such as monthly social evenings or coffee mornings to allow them to take a break from their usual routine. Other social activities are also worth considering, such as a 'walking for health' group, exercise classes, babysitting circles or trips out for older people.

The Ridgeway Surgery Patient Group in Harrow was set up in 2006 with the aim of engaging local patients on improving their own health and well-being, and providing them with the support to do so.

According to founding member Sarah Carter, the group's main successes to date have been their health promotion events, which aim to educate patients on managing their own health conditions. Recent events have included talks on arthritis, planning for a family, and diabetes. At the diabetes event, a specialist diabetes nurse provided patients with practical advice on how best to manage their lifestyles to ensure they stay healthy, as well as giving them the opportunity to ask questions about the condition.

In collaboration with the staff and other health professionals, they have also held two well-attended 'open-house' health events, offering advice on healthy lifestyles. This featured information on issues including alcohol, smoking, exercise, diet, blood pressure, cholesterol and dental hygiene.

4. Educate patients – A large number of PPGs have very successfully set up free health education events, to provide patients with advice on a range of common conditions, as well as on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

If you're looking for fresh ideas on how to engage specific patient groups, consider something like a pamper morning for new mothers at the surgery with crèche facilities, manicures and facials. You can use the opportunity to educate them on common infant and childhood health issues, and train them to distinguish between something that requires medical assistance and something they can treat themselves. This is also an opportunity to get them to think about joining the PPG.

According to Bob Seddon, Chair of Patient Partners at the Moreton Health Clinic in The Wirral, one of the group's most important pieces of work is providing information leaflets about health issues, including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and smoking, to those unable to access this kind of information through the internet. The leaflets are popular with patients and feature details of how to access local specialist help and support.

The group also worked closely with practice staff in response to patient demand for more flexible opening hours. The group managed to negotiate for the reception desk to remain open over weekday lunchtimes, so patients could have the flexibility to pop in during their lunch hours to drop off prescriptions and make appointments.

The chair of the local Primary Care Trust recently attended a monthly meeting to consult with the group on ideas and initiatives that could improve the way in which primary care services are administered across the region.

5. Get the timing right – If you are considering providing information or running an event to address a particular health issue such as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), diabetes or smoking, consider linking it in with a national calendar 'hook' such as the shortest day of the year on 21 December 2009, World Diabetes Day on 14 November 2010 or national No Smoking Day on 10 March 2010.

For a list of other useful dates see [section 5g](#) of the toolkit.

4. Acting as a local ambassador

The Growing Patient Participation campaign is always looking for campaign ‘ambassadors’ to help spread the word about the benefits of PPGs, and support its work to get more groups set up.

Acting as a campaign ambassador needn’t be time consuming and would be an opportunity to showcase your own group’s successes, demonstrating what a PPG can achieve. There are a number of ways you can support the *Growing Patient Participation* national campaign:

- by undertaking your own publicity to highlight the good work your group is doing in the local media, to inspire other patients and practices in the area;
- by directly contacting other practices locally that don’t yet have a PPG, and the Primary Care Trust, to champion PPGs and encourage action; and
- by working with us to showcase your successful initiatives, tips and advice on the campaign website and in the national media.

If you have examples of successful activities that you would be keen to share, or if you have valuable tips and advice on running a group that you think would be useful to others just starting out, we want to hear from you. In the first instance, you can email us at **campaign@growingppgs.com**.

The sections below provide more detail on how you can undertake your own publicity, and work with other practices, your PCT and other groups including the Local Involvement Network (LINK). Template materials to help you undertake these activities are included in [section 5](#) of the toolkit.

a. Publicising your successes

The media has a strong influence on public opinion and can be a good way to reach a wide range of audiences who cannot otherwise be reached through direct communication. In particular, using your local newspapers, radio station, and even regional TV is a great way to demonstrate your group’s ambitions and core successes, and to highlight the benefits of being involved in a PPG to a wide audience.

Below is a quick guide on how to use the media effectively. You will find a sample press release and ‘letter to the editor’ at the back of this toolkit – do make use of them when undertaking your publicity work.

1. Know your media – A great place to start is to do an audit of all your potential media targets. Research all the local newspapers, magazines such as the parish and council newsletters, and radio stations, and find out which journalists tend to report on health issues. In the local paper, also look out for the ‘diary’ or ‘news in brief’ sections where you might be able to place notices about upcoming events, or short updates on your work. ‘Real life’ reporters (who focus on writing strong, human-interest features) may also be a good target, as they are always on the lookout for compelling personal stories.

2. What makes a good story? – Journalists are always keen to bring their audiences relevant information that is new or surprising in some way. They also prefer to feature local people (ie case studies) sharing their experience, as this makes compelling content that their audience can easily identify with.

Examples of the types of stories you could consider are:

- *announcement of an upcoming event* – for example, a call for local people to attend a health promotion event taking place in one to two weeks' time;
- *launch of a new PPG-led initiative* – for example, announcing the availability of new, free transport facilities to and from the GP surgery for elderly patients;
- *successes achieved with a PPG-led initiative* – highlighting the benefit patients have gained from, say, the availability of bereavement support services, ideally involving real life example(s) of individual(s) who have been helped;
- *facts and figures* – numbers are an effective way of grabbing the attention of readers or listeners, so you could, for example, highlight the amount of money raised by the PPG over the past year and how it has been used; the amount that has been saved by providing a particular service in a different way; or the number of people helped by a new service over the past six months/year;
- *new research* – again, research and statistics tend to go down well; for example, a PPG survey on patient views about their local health services, and what has been/is being done by the PPG and the practice to address patient needs;
- *key milestones* – the group's first anniversary, or the appointment of a new chair for example, or even the anniversary of the availability of a new service can often be newsworthy in their own right;
- *awareness days and calendar 'hooks'* – for example, as outlined in [section 3c](#) above, using an awareness day such as No Smoking Day or World Asthma Day as a hook to launch a stop smoking advice service or run an asthma information event can be very effective. A list of useful dates is included in [section 5g](#).

3. Develop a press release – Writing a short, punchy press release is a good way to package up your story for journalists. Another way to put your opinion across, or highlight a particular piece of news, is to write a letter to the editor of the local paper, marking it for publication. A template press release has been included in [section 5d](#) of the toolkit for your reference, and below are some tips on drafting an effective release.

Top tips on writing a press release

- In general, when communicating your messages via a press release, ensure that the headline and first paragraph encapsulate the ‘who, where, what, when and why’ of your story.
- Consider the three messages you want to communicate and ensure they are prioritised accordingly (see [section 5a](#) for examples of messages).
- Use short quotes from a PPG or practice representative, and a patient who has benefited from the service being highlighted, to support your story.
- Remember that people make the news, so it is important to have spokespeople and case studies available to speak to the journalist on request, to bring your story to life and to support your press release.
- Be familiar with the media you are planning to send the press release to, and try to use the writing style and tone of the publication(s), so journalists can immediately see how the story would fit on their pages.
- Always include contact details immediately at the end of a press release and highlight what other information is available (eg interviews with spokespeople, photography).
- Constantly evaluate whether your press release is relevant and interesting to your target audience – is it something you would be interested to read in your local paper?

4. ‘Sell in’ your story – There is more to getting your story covered than simply sending a press release to the local paper. Investing time in talking directly to journalists is much more likely to be effective – it can also give you the chance to match your story more closely to the journalist’s interest. This is known as ‘selling in’ your story.

When selling in a story there are some basic tactics that are worth remembering:

- Watch, read or listen to the media before you make contact. Try to understand where your story may feature in the publication, for example, the news pages, health page, success story of the week, diary section etc.
- Call the correct contact, eg feature ideas should be sent to the features editor, and news stories to the news desk.

The Priory Fields Patient Participation Group in Huntingdon recently used The Hunts Post to tell the local community about a health promotion event it hosted specifically for the Polish community. The piece reported that a Polish doctor and a Polish receptionist from the practice led the evening, providing information about services on offer, and that members of the Huntingdon District Council health and leisure services and a diversity officer attended to provide leaflets about healthy living and stopping smoking.

The newly formed Priory Road Patient Participation Group in Alcester used the Alcester Chronicle to inform the local community of the group's establishment, and let them know a bit about it, including why it was set up and who the members are. The article highlighted that the group is using the practice's flu jab clinic as an opportunity to host their first fundraising raffle.

- Know the best times to call and avoid calling journalists when they are on deadline or just before a programme is due on the air. If you call at an inappropriate time, ask them what are good and bad times for you to call. As a guide, if you are contacting a daily newspaper, it is better to contact them earlier in the morning; avoid contacting a weekly paper the day before it is due out; for radio or TV programmes, contact them a few days in advance, shortly after they have been on air.
- Before launching into a big 'sell' on your story, ask the journalist whether this is a good time to talk.
- Begin your call with a brief but interesting introduction, clearly demonstrating your relevance to their audience, for example, by letting the journalist know where you are calling from, letting them know you are getting in touch because you have an interesting story on local health service improvements that you feel they would be interested in. They may be interested to know more, in which case be prepared with a short explanation of your story. They may just ask you to email the press release across.
- If possible, relate back to a recent piece that the journalist has written on a similar subject, so they understand the type of story you have.
- If you have promised to get back to a journalist, do it quickly and before their deadline.
- Be wary of voicemail; it is always better to call back. Only leave a message if you have a truly irresistible story, leaving your name and telephone number at the beginning and end of the message.

b. Working with other practices

If there are other PPGs set up in neighbouring practices, it is worth considering setting up a contact network to ensure you are making the most of the expertise across the groups, and working towards the most appropriate goals to meet the needs of the wider community.

For example, you could consider working together to run a joint health promotion event or fundraising venture. Working together could amplify the impact of any initiative you are planning to undertake. Sharing information, experiences and best practice can also ensure each individual PPG is working to best effect.

c. Working with your Primary Care Trust

There are a number of ways you can consider working with your PCT, either to increase the impact of your activities, or to set up additional support for all the PPGs and practices in your area.

In the first instance, it is important that you make the PCT aware of your group and the work you are doing. Your first point of contact should be the chair of the Professional Executive Committee within the PCT – your practice managers and GPs within the practice will be able to help you to identify the right person to speak to.

If you have ideas on how local services could be changed or developed, not just for your practice area but for the wider local population (for example, if you have identified the need for a service such as out-of-hours support for individuals with a specific health condition), don't hesitate to discuss these ideas with your PCT and find out how you might be able to take them forward. If you do have ideas on changes to the way local services are delivered, get in touch with the commissioning lead within the PCT – again, practice staff should be able to help you identify the best point of contact. The commissioning team at the PCT may well also want to call on your group for input on their plans for service changes or developments.

NHS Norfolk recently set up a PPG Information Exchange Newsletter, with the aim of bringing all PPGs in the area together as part of a single 'community'. The newsletter features best practice examples, ideas, advice, and gives local PPGs a platform where they can ask for help from each other, or offer insights to other groups. It is also a way of letting PPGs know about other groups in their area and what sort of activities they run.

Rebecca Champion, Engagement Manager at NHS Norfolk, started the newsletter, and is also working to develop a special section of the NHS Norfolk website that is dedicated to PPGs. She said, "It is early days but I hope that the newsletter and web page will help PPGs to get started and to keep going. We already have a system where members of established groups will go to groups that are new or who have lost their way a bit, and be a buddy to help them with some new ideas."

You could also work with your PCT to set up a support network for PPGs across the area, and to encourage more to be set up. As outlined in [section 4e](#) below, if you are happy to take the lead in offering support to other practices, get help from the PCT to flag that this support is available to GPs and PPGs across the local area. You could work together to set up an area-wide newsletter, or even a meeting to bring together all the practice managers and PPG chairs to share ideas and information.

d. Working with your Local Involvement Network

Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) are made up of individuals and community groups whose aim is to work together to improve local services. Their remit covers all the publicly funded health and adult social care services in a local authority area. They are independent, and have specific powers and funding to help them do their job.

Many PPGs are already working with their LINK on issues that affect the wider population, beyond the community served by their general practice.

There are a number of benefits to getting involved with your LINK:

- It offers access and exposure to a wider range of people across the area. LINK membership can include carers and service users, community leaders, patient representatives, charities, Foundation Trust members, faith groups, tenant organisations, youth councils, organisations representing minority ethnic groups and business federations, many of whom will be interested and able to support the work of your PPG.
- It can help you gauge the views of patients on local health services across a wider area. This could provide you with inspiration for additional initiatives to run not only with your practice, but across the whole of the local authority area, in partnership with other PPGs and local organisations that share your objective of improving the health and wellbeing of the local population.
- It can strengthen and support your work. LINKs have statutory powers to ensure that action takes place, and budgets to aid their efforts, so can be a useful partner in carrying out key initiatives. LINKs bring together individuals and groups across the community, not just within health, but also from business and the voluntary sector, among others – this offers you a greater voice and more resources with which to get things done.
- It can help your PPG to address issues that you may be aware of, but that sit beyond the remit of your practice; for example, improvements that you feel could be made to the provision of services in the local hospital or by the council.

Finally, LINKs can also learn a great deal from PPGs, whether it's how to draw in and retain members, techniques for effectively gauging patient opinions, or evidence of the real impact of patient participation on the ground.

e. Local 'mentoring'

As an established group, you could play an important role as a mentor, to convince other local practices to set up a group, to help new groups get started and overcome any challenges they may be facing, and to support other existing groups that may be experiencing problems.

In order for a local mentoring scheme to work successfully, it helps to have a 'lead practice' in the area that can champion the cause, and can be a point of contact for those who need advice. If your practice is running a particularly successful group, why not take the lead in setting up an informal mentoring scheme? Below are some pointers on how you can go about this, all of which you can undertake independently, but do approach your PCT for support, as they have an important role to play in supporting and nurturing the work of PPGs in their local area.

1. Take the lead – Once your practice has decided to take a lead in setting up a mentoring scheme, you'll need to spread the word that you are available to give help and advice to others in the area – this is something the PCT should be able to help with using their existing channels, but could also be as simple as ringing other local practices.

Toni Fisher, Practice Manager at the Whaddon House Surgery in Bletchley, Berkshire runs a mentoring scheme in her area. She says:

“Our PPG had been running for some time, and had become successful relatively quickly. There are 27 practices in the Milton Keynes area, and I knew that some were questioning the benefit of PPGs, so I decided to give a presentation to a group of practice managers in the area to talk about our group and the benefits and successes we had enjoyed since starting.”

Since Toni gave the presentation, her practice is now seen as ‘the place to go’ for advice, and many practices will just give her a call to ask questions about the group or to ask for help solving a problem. She also regularly goes out to practices to talk to them directly, offering tips and advice on maintaining momentum within the group.

2. Make the case – Why not consider putting together an informal talk or presentation to highlight the benefits of the PPG, the work your group successfully undertakes, and some tips on maintaining momentum and driving initiatives forward? You could hold informal Q&A sessions at other practices, invite patients and staff from other practices to sit in on one of your meetings, or even offer to present at a Local Medical Committee meeting, details of which the GPs in your practice should be able to provide you with.

3. Nurturing new groups – If you know of a new PPG locally that has just been set up, consider offering to attend its first meeting to help get it going and ‘break the ice’. You could also work with the members to develop the first agenda and terms of reference for the group based on your own – it may be that the group is ready and willing, but unsure of exactly what to do first.

4. Open door policy – Let practices in the area know that they can contact you for advice at any time, and make your contact details available to them. This could be done through a notice in local media, via the PCT, through contacting them directly, or through Local Medical Committees.

5. Resources

This section contains a range of template materials designed to help you undertake your own communications activity.

a. Key messages

Below are a few key messages about PPGs, their benefits and how they work, which you may find useful as a shortcut when drafting communication materials – including leaflets, press releases, newsletters and website text – for patients, other practices and the media. You may want to tailor these messages with specific information about the work of your PPG, to give them more impact.

PPGs – an overview

- PPGs act as representatives of the patient population, and are a way of better connecting the general practice with the community it serves.
- PPGs are generally made up of a group of volunteer patients, the Practice Manager and one or more GPs from within the practice. They meet on a regular basis to have open and constructive discussions about the services available – always with a view to taking action to make real improvements for patients and for the practice.
- All PPGs are different, and the specific aims of each group depend on local needs and the interests of the participants, although they all aim to help ensure practices remain accountable and responsive to patients' needs.
- From the minute a patient decides they need to see a doctor, to the moment they walk into a consultation room, PPGs have a role in ensuring the patient experience is as smooth and pleasant as possible – from a patient's dealing with reception staff and ease of booking an appointment, to their experience in the waiting room and the level of choice on offer.

Benefits for patients

- PPGs are a grassroots way of affecting change, and involving patients in improving the health and well-being of the local community. They have an increasingly important role to play in helping to give patients a say in the way services are delivered to best meet their needs, and the needs of the local community.
- PPGs are about implementing real, positive change in their communities. Examples of the work of existing PPGs include:
 - establishing schemes to help transport less mobile patients to and from the practice;
 - helping to introduce non-clinical services such as counselling or bereavement support;
 - working with the practice to set up health education initiatives ;
 - improving the waiting room environment; and
 - helping in fundraising for improvements to the practice environment.

- PPGs help to improve communication between patients and their practice. By producing regular newsletters, improving practice websites and chatting to patients face to face, they are able to better understand, and help the practice in responding to, the real needs of the community.
- Anyone who is willing and able to give their time can get involved, and being part of the PPG can also be a great way to meet people and develop skills in, for example, negotiation, public speaking and dealing with the media.

Benefits for practices

- PPGs can help GPs to develop an equal partnership with their patients. They can help them to communicate accurately and honestly with individual patients and with the wider community about key health matters.
- PPGs provide an ideal mechanism for gaining feedback from the community. They allow practice staff the opportunity to explain to patients the reasons why services have been set up in a particular way, and why certain procedures are carried out. They are a forum for constructive discussion and input from the community on how services are currently working and what could potentially be done to make them more effective.
- PPGs can bring significant benefits to practices: reducing costs, improving services, allowing resources to be used more efficiently, and developing mutually supportive networks outside of individual appointments.

b. Questions and answers

Below are answers to a range of questions on PPGs that you may receive from prospective members or journalists. Again, you may want to tailor the answers to suit your local circumstances.

1. What are PPGs?

Generally made up of a group of volunteer patients, the practice manager and one or more of the GPs from the practice, PPGs meet on a regular basis to discuss the services on offer, and how improvements can be made for the benefit of patients and the practice.

The beauty of PPGs is that there is no set way in which they work – the work of each group entirely depend on local needs – but they all have the aim of making sure that their practice puts the patient, and improving health, at the heart of everything it does.

2. What do PPGs do?

PPGs can play a number of roles in the practice, from carrying out research to understand the views of the wider patient population and offering feedback on the patient perspective, to helping the practice make the most effective use of its resources.

In addition to helping improve communication between the practice and the local population it serves, PPGs offer practical hands-on support to the practice, for example, by helping to run health promotion events and supporting annual flu jab clinics.

3. What are the benefits of joining the PPG?

Being involved in the PPG gives you the opportunity to have a say in and, what's more, to take action to improve, the way health services are delivered in the community. The PPG has a key role in increasing the quality and accessibility of the care available to you, your family, your neighbours and the whole of your community.

It's a great way to give something back, and many members get a real buzz from having helped make important changes to the practice. It's also a great way to meet new people and learn new skills, including diplomacy and team work.

4. How often do you meet and what do you do?

We meet on a [*monthly*] basis at the practice for [*an hour*] over a cup of tea, to discuss forthcoming activity and address issues that have been raised by members of the group or other patients. We exist primarily to provide a link between the patients and practice staff, and to help make sure the needs of all sections of the community are met. [*Insert details of the work of your PPG.*]

5. What are some examples of success to date?

[*Example text – edit as appropriate.*] Since the group formed, it has successfully helped introduce more flexible opening hours so patients can book appointments and drop off repeat prescription requests at times that suit them, rather than just during office hours. We also help the annual winter flu jab clinic run smoothly, by making the experience as easy and stress free as possible, especially for our elderly patients.

6. Isn't the group just an opportunity for people to grumble about the practice and its doctors?

When our group formed, it drew up a constitution, which sets out exactly what our aims and objectives are. Having a constitution helps keep us focused on action and making a real difference, rather than becoming a talking shop. In order to ensure that everyone is focused on making positive change, we make sure all members have equal input, and have established a collaborative culture with the practice, and between the members.

7. How much time does it take up being involved in the PPG?

The time commitment for a patient involved in the PPG tends to include attendance at [*monthly*] meetings. Some PPG members will choose to take on additional roles that are more time consuming, such as editing/contributing to the PPG newsletter or setting up and running health education or fundraising events. This additional contribution allows the PPG to have more of a positive impact on the practice and the local population.

8. Is there a financial risk or commitment for anyone joining the PPG?

It is pretty unusual for any payment to be involved, as individuals tend to join on a voluntary basis. There are a few PPGs that do run effective membership schemes, however, involving a small joining fee that goes directly towards resources to help the PPG operate effectively.

9. I don't have a background in healthcare. Does this matter?

Not at all, in fact no formal training is required to be a member of the PPG. Members can often bring their own skills to the task (for example, any writing experience can be helpful in developing and contributing to a PPG newsletter), but most importantly they just need to be keen and focused on taking positive action to help the practice and the local patient population.

10. How do I join?

If you are interested in joining the PPG, or would like to speak to someone to find out more, leave your details at reception and a member of the group will give you a call *[or as appropriate]*.

c. Template invitation to join the PPG

If you are considering asking GPs within your practice to invite specific patients to join the PPG (as outlined in [section 3b](#) above), you may find the sample copy below useful. This can be tailored and adapted into an invitation card or letter, which GPs can hand out to patients as relevant.

[Name of practice] **Health Clinic**

Patient Participation Group

Get involved to help shape the way health services are delivered by your practice

The *[name of practice]* Health Clinic Patient Participation Group works to improve communication between the Clinic and its patients, to ensure the services on offer truly meet the needs of all patients. Working with the practice, the group has recently *[Example text – edit as appropriate]*:

- run a successful fundraising event to pay for refurbishing the waiting room;
- negotiated for the reception desk to stay open over weekday lunchtimes; and
- organised a health promotion day to raise awareness of ways to tackle obesity and the harms associated with smoking.

The group is already doing some great work on behalf of all the patients who use the *[name of practice]* Health Clinic, and it would like your help. It is always looking for enthusiastic individuals to join the Group, share their ideas on how services could be changed, and get involved in making those changes – for the good of the patients and the practice.

The group meets once a month at *[venue]* on *[address]*. If you are interested in getting involved, or would just like to find out more, please contact *[name of contact]* on *[phone number]*. Or just pop along to our next meeting on *[date]* at *[time]*.

We look forward to hearing from you!

d. Template press release

As mentioned in [section 4a](#) of the toolkit, a short, punchy press release is an ideal way to package up a story in a way that will appeal to journalists, and makes it easy for them to lift from when writing articles.

Below is a template press release written about a hypothetical health promotion event on obesity. This should provide you with a sense of the sort of tone, language and content to use. The press release could be tailored to reflect anything from publicising a specific success or milestone, to an appeal for new members, or the announcement of an upcoming initiative or service.

19 November 2009

Keeping the residents of Richmond fighting fit

Health promotion evening offers advice on tackling obesity and staying healthy

Residents of Richmond are invited to attend a free event on tackling obesity next Thursday evening, 26 November. The health promotion event will take place at the Methodist Church Hall on Richmond High Street, and aims to provide local residents with important information about weight management and maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

The event, arranged by the Friends of Richmond Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG), will take place between 6pm and 8pm and will feature presentations from:

- Marilyn Jones, qualified dietician, on how to eat healthily – without depriving yourself
- Matt Branson, fitness and lifestyle coach, on the importance of regular exercise, and how to start – and maintain new fitness regimes.

Staff from Richmond Medical Centre will also be on hand to give out information, provide one-to-one advice, and help you calculate your body mass index.

Karen Bradbury, Chair of the Friends of Richmond Medical Centre PPG, said:

“Obesity is an increasingly important issue for people of all ages. This, the Medical Centre’s fourth health promotion evening of the year, will give patients practical advice to help them manage their weight and improve their wellbeing, fitting around their daily routine. It will also be an opportunity for patients to speak to members of the PPG about the work we do – we are always on the lookout for new members and are keen to hear from anyone who’s interested in getting involved.”

Continues next page

The Friends of Richmond Medical Centre PPG is made up of half a dozen patient volunteers who meet on a monthly basis to discuss the services on offer, and to take action to make changes and improvements for the good of the patient community. The group was established when the Richmond Medical Centre moved to new premises on Thames Road four years ago, and is always interested to hear from people of all ages who would like to get involved. Anyone interested in finding out more is encouraged to leave their details at the Medical Centre's reception desk.

The Friends of Richmond Medical Centre PPG is one of a number of PPGs in the area, as well as up and down the country, that seek to improve communication between the practice and its patients, always with the aim of taking action to make real improvements for the health and wellbeing of the local community.

- Ends -

For more information, images or to speak to a member of Friends of Richmond Medical Centre PPG, call David White, the PPG secretary, on 020 8123 4567, or email david.white@gmail.com

Notes to editors

About Friends of Richmond Medical Centre PPG

Friends of Richmond Medical Centre PPG was established in June 2005, and meets on the first Thursday of the month in the Richmond Medical Centre, 31 Thames Road, TW9 6AE, between 6.30pm and 8pm. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday 3 December. If you would like to attend, please call David White on 020 8123 4567 or leave your details with the reception staff at the practice to register your interest.

About Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)

PPGs are made up of a group of volunteer patients who meet on a regular basis to support and improve the running of their local GP practice. All PPGs are different, and the specific aims of each group will depend on the local needs and interests of the participants, although they all have the overarching aim of helping to ensure GP practices remain accountable, dynamic and responsive to patients' needs.

There is lots of evidence of PPGs making real, constructive changes to choice and delivery of local health services. From the minute a patient decides they need to see a doctor, to the moment they walk into a consultation room, PPGs can be effective in ensuring the patient experience is as smooth and pleasant as possible – from a patient's dealing with reception staff and ease of booking an appointment, to their experience in the waiting room and the level of choice on offer.

About the Growing Patient Participation Campaign

The Royal College of General Practitioners, British Medical Association, NHS Alliance and National Association for Patient Participation, supported by the Department of Health, have joined together to launch a national awareness campaign aimed at promoting the benefits of PPGs and encouraging the creation of more groups in more practices. Visit www.growingppgs.com to find out more.

Five key features of a good press release

- A catchy headline.
- A subheading that neatly summarises your story.
- A quote from the PPG chair, GP, patient or someone else significant to your story.
- Contact details for someone the journalist can call for more information, and detail of what else you can offer to support the story (eg images, interviews etc).
- A 'boilerplate' in the notes to editors section with further supporting information about your PPG, PPGs in general and the *Growing Patient Participation* campaign.

e. Template 'letter to the editor'

Below is a template for a letter that you can tailor and send to the letters page of your local newspaper, as a way of publicising your PPG and calling for new members.

The Editor

[Insert publication name]

[Insert publication address]

Dear Sir,

Everyone likes to have a say on the things that affect them and most particularly when it comes to health. On behalf of the *[insert name]* GP surgery in *[insert place]* I am encouraging members of the community to join our Patient Participation Group (PPG), to help play a part in continually improving the patient experience and ensuring health services match the needs of the local population.

The group meets on a regular basis to support and improve the running of the practice, and already this year we have *[insert information on recent successes.]*

From the ease of booking an appointment, to your experience in the waiting room and the level of choice on offer, the PPG wants to hear your views on how we can better meet the needs of the community.

Interested readers should contact *[insert details]* to find out more.

Yours sincerely

[Insert name]

Chair

[Insert name] Patient Participation Group

f. Template website and newsletter copy

If you don't already have a website for your PPG, below is some sample text that you can tailor and use on the practice website, as a short introduction to the PPG. Similarly, this text can be adapted for use in the practice newsletter – or even to offer for the council or parish newsletter – to raise awareness and draw in new members.

Welcome to the [insert name] Patient Participation Group website!

[Insert name] surgery is eager to ensure that local people are actively involved in deciding how the health services they use should develop. To provide patients with the opportunity to express their views, we have set up/we run the [insert name] Patient Participation Group.

The aim of the Patient Participation Group is to give patients, GPs and practice staff an opportunity to meet, to exchange ideas and information, and then to take action. Our group's activities typically include *[holding health information events; consulting with patients on their experiences and their views on how services could be changed or improved; producing a newsletter to keep patients up to date on the activities of the group and the services that the practice offers – and much more!]*

Interested in getting involved?

Anyone and everyone is welcome to join the group, as long as you are registered with the practice and interested in working together to make positive changes for the practice and its patients. Our group generally meets every [month] at the practice. For further information about the group, please contact [insert details].

Forthcoming events

There are several ways to find out what is happening with the Patient Participation Group:

- *[See the Patient Participation Group Posters in the surgery.*
- *Read the leaflets available at reception.*
- *Check this website for news and updates.]*

g. Useful dates

Below is a list of awareness days and other calendar 'hooks' which you may find useful to time your communications activity around. For example, you could schedule a patient health event on World Asthma Day, and notify your local media that experts will be on hand to provide asthma sufferers with information about managing their condition.

Event	Date
Carers Rights Day	Friday 04 December 2009
Mental Health Today	Tuesday 08 December 2009
Shortest Day	Monday 21 December 2009
World Braille Day	Monday 04 January 2010
Beat Blue Monday	Monday 18 January 2010
Macmillan Concertalk	Week Monday 21 – Friday 25 January 2010
National Bug Busting Day	Sunday 31 January 2010 (and 15 June, 31 October)
National Heart Month	Monday 01 – Sunday 28 February 2010
Marie Curie Cancer Care's Great Daffodil Appeal	Monday 01 – Wednesday 31 March 2010
Wellbeing Week	Monday 08 – Sunday 14 March 2010
No Smoking Day	Wednesday 10 March 2010
British Summer Time begins	Sunday 28 March 2010
World Asthma Day	Tuesday 04 May 2010
World Hepatitis Day	Wednesday 19 May 2010
World MS Day	Wednesday 26 May 2010
World No Tobacco Day	Monday 31 May 2010
Cancer Research UK's Race For Life	May 2010
World Blood Donor Day	Monday 14 June 2010
Longest day	Monday 21 June 2010
World's Biggest Coffee Morning	Friday 24 September 2010
World Heart Day	Sunday 26 September 2010
World Arthritis Day	Tuesday 12 October 2010
British Summer Time ends	Sunday 31 October 2010
Wear It Pink For Breast Cancer Day	October 2010
National Stress Awareness Day	Wednesday 03 November 2010
World Diabetes Day	Sunday 14 November 2010
International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Friday 03 December 2010

6. Further sources of support for PPG activity

a. Where to go for support and advice

- **National Association for Patient Participation (NAPP)** – NAPP is the umbrella organisation for PPGs within primary care, and has well over 400 members. NAPP is a key partner in the *Growing Patient Participation* campaign, and offers practical help and advice on getting a PPG started, as well as guidance on maintaining the group and making it more effective. NAPP's activities include information provision, conferences and workshops, research, consultancy, publications and speaking engagements.

According to Graham Box, Chief Executive of NAPP: "Our most important roles are to promote patient participation, support new PPGs to get started and share good practice."

To find out more about NAPP, visit www.napp.org.uk, or contact Audrey Hoggard at audrey.hoggard@napp.org.uk.

- **Primary Care Trust** – As referenced in [section 4](#) above, PCTs should take an active role in supporting the work of PPGs across their patch, and in creating an environment for groups to network and assist each other. This support could also take the form of financial help, and this is something to discuss with your PCT. A simple and effective way to engage representatives from the PCT is to invite them along to a meeting or event, to give them first-hand experience of the value of the PPG and the type of work they would be supporting.
- **LINKs** – Similarly, as outlined in [section 4d](#) above, engaging with and being part of your Local Involvement Network could provide you with access to additional resources and funding.

b. Raising funds to support your activity

There are a number of methods you could employ to raise money to fund the running of the PPG, and undertaking of initiatives. Some of the tried and tested methods are:

- approaching your PCT for financial support;
- getting involved with your LINK;
- setting up a PPG membership scheme with a small fee;
- approaching local businesses for donations;
- setting up a book sale in the practice waiting room;
- running a cake (or other food) stall at local events such as fetes, farmers' markets, table top and car boot sales;
- Undertaking a Christmas raffle, selling tickets in the practice waiting room;
- running a coffee morning or afternoon tea party, with a small attendance fee;
- organising an event such as a charity fashion show, again, with an attendance fee;

The Davenport House PPG in Harpenden uses a membership subscription model to raise funds to support its activity. From the outset, the aim of the group was to ensure strong communication with the wider patient population, beyond the small PPG working party. In order to achieve this, they created a high-quality newsletter providing patients with information on issues affecting the practice and upcoming PPG initiatives, as well as articles written by health specialists on a range of health issues.

Patients are asked to pay a small subscription fee of £10 per family per year in order to receive the newsletter. So far around 20% of the practice population have signed up to the membership scheme, and their subscription fees go towards producing the newsletter, as well as funding a range of health education events for the local community.

- Getting members of the PPG or the practice to do a sponsored hike, bike ride, or something even more adventurous; and
- Running a quiz night at the practice or another venue such as the local pub.

Many PPGs have gained charitable status, to support their work to raise funds, buy and donate items to the surgery. If you would like to find out more about how your PPG can apply for charitable status, get in touch with NAPP – contact audrey.hoggard@napp.org.uk or visit the NAPP website, www.napp.org.uk.

While some PPGs opt for undertaking smaller-scale fundraising events throughout the year in order to raise money for a specific initiative or purchase, others prefer to do one big push annually, to gain donations to fund all their activity throughout the year.

The King Edward Road Surgery PPG in Northampton runs one main fundraising event each year – the Christmas raffle. The group spends six weeks selling raffle tickets in the surgery, at a table set up in the waiting room and manned by PPG members throughout the day. They sell between 6,000 and 7,500 tickets on average each year. Entrants stand to win one of three small cash prizes – £100, £50 and £25 – as well as a range of donated prizes including chocolates, biscuits and bottles of wine. The draw is held in the surgery reception area at noon on the last day tickets are sold. Patients in the waiting room at the time are asked to draw the winning tickets, to ensure impartiality.

The raffle raises enough money each year to cover the cost of the PPG's newsletter, 'Contact' – which is available for patients to pick up in the surgery, in electronic form on the practice website and is posted out to housebound patients – as well as the purchase of new items for the surgery. In previous years, through the proceeds of the raffle, the group has purchased, among other things, a dermascope to aid diagnoses, a wheelchair for patients to use in the surgery and a defibrillator for emergency use.

This year, the raffle has funded an additional refrigerator for the swine flu vaccine, meaning that vaccines can be stored on each floor of the surgery. This saves both the doctors' and patients' time, as the doctors don't need to go to other floors to get supplies.

c. The *Making a Difference* fund

The *Making a Difference* fund has been launched by the *Growing Patient Participation* campaign to support initiatives undertaken by PPGs. A total fund of £20,000 is available, and PPGs can bid for up to £4,000 to fund a new initiative or support the continuation of valuable existing activities. All bids will be judged by a panel including the NAPP, PCT, PPG, GP and Practice Manager representatives.

All types and sizes of initiative will be considered; however, the successful bids must demonstrate that they are achievable, will respond to local patient needs, and will have a real impact on the health and well-being of the local population.

Awards will be made in two rounds. The deadline for application for the first round was 23 November 2009 and over 100 entries were received. Awards will be made to successful bidders in mid-December. The deadline for applications for the second round is **12 January 2010** and awards will be made in February. All unsuccessful bidders from round one will be entered automatically into the second round.

PPGs can apply by email or in writing – you can download an application form on the campaign website, **www.growingppgs.com**

7. Further sources of information

To find out more about PPGs and how to get involved, visit the campaign website, **www.growingppgs.com**, where you can sign up to receive regular Campaign Updates with lots of useful information, case studies and the latest campaign news.

To make contact with the campaign team, or to volunteer your PPG as a case study for use in national media relations, email **campaign@growingppgs.com**

For information about any of the campaign partners, visit their websites:

National Association for Patient Participation

www.napp.org.uk

NAPP is the umbrella organisation for PPGs within primary care.

NHS Alliance

www.nhsalliance.org

The NHS Alliance provides support for Primary Care Groups and professionals working in Primary Care in the UK.

British Medical Association

www.bma.org.uk

The BMA is the doctors' professional organisation, representing doctors in all branches of medicine across the UK.

Royal College of General Practitioners

www.rcgp.org.uk

The Royal College of General Practitioners is the UK's professional body for GPs.

Department of Health

www.dh.gov.uk

The Growing Patient Participation campaign is supported by the Department of Health's GP Access programme, which has the aim of increasing the responsiveness of practices to the needs of their patients.

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