



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PATIENT PARTICIPATION

Registered Charity No 292157

### Top Tips for good CCG engagement with Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)

#### Introduction

Every GP practice in England must have a Patient Participation Group (PPG) as part of the GP contract. This gives primary care – and those commissioning primary care and other local services – a powerful and potentially useful patient voice to tap into. As with all engagement activity, there are some simple ways to make sure the engagement is appropriate, authentic, and is of value to the patients taking part as well as to the CCG.

As part of its work supporting PPG engagement in primary care, NHS England commissioned the National Association for Patient Participation (N.A.P.P.) to develop a series of practical resource guides – [Building Better Participation](#) – designed to help share and grow best practice.

Whilst it is principally targeted at PPGs and GP practices, some CCGs already use *Building Better Participation* to enhance their engagement with local PPGs. This short guide is designed to complement that resource, from the perspective of CCGs.

#### **Case Study 1: Not like this!**

*(drawn from an amalgam of real examples)*

*“East Tries Hard” CCG heard from a conference that it is good practice to engage with PPGs. On her return, the Accountable Officer asked the Engagement lead to “sort something out”.*

*The Engagement lead wrote a questionnaire on “what makes a good PPG”, as the CCG wants to engage with good ones. He wrote to the Practice Managers of local GP practices asking them to send their PPG Chair to a network event in a couple of weeks, asking them to complete the questionnaire, and including an agenda for the meeting setting out what the CCG wanted the PPGs to support.*

*He was disappointed to receive responses from some PPGs saying they could not attend – because the meeting was on a weekday morning, because of the short notice, because of the travel costs to get to the venue, or because they did not see the agenda as useful to their PPG. Most of the PPGs chose not to return the questionnaire as they did not understand its value or how it was to be used.*

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PATIENT PARTICIPATION

### Eight Top Tips to help CCGs engage well with PPGs

#### 1. Build relationships

PPGs' members are all volunteers, committed to their own GP practice. Their involvement with the NHS is likely to be limited to engaging with their practice, plus using other NHS services. Most members of the public do not know about CCGs or how commissioning works, and as such are unlikely to see an obvious personal benefit in getting involved. But even well-informed members may not see the advantage to their PPG of involvement with the CCG.

Building relationships is key to good involvement. Find out from your practices who the PPG Chairs are. Offer to meet them or phone them to introduce yourself and find out more about them. These relationships will be key to whether or not a PPG considers it worthwhile getting involved with the CCG.

#### 2. Offer networking opportunities – but don't dictate agendas

Many PPGs still do not meet together in local areas, and would value opportunities to do so. Offering to host PPG network events can be a positive step, especially if you then resource the meetings well (refreshments, venues, covering travel and other expenses). Enabling PPGs to design the agenda so it meets their needs, whilst introducing possible topics of value to the CCG, is also helpful in relationship building.

#### 3. Work together in planning, seeking to co-produce with PPGs

You may have a clear idea of what you want PPGs to consider, but you will get better engagement if there are genuine opportunities for PPGs to influence the activity they might get involved in.

Whilst those involved in PPGs are generally interested in health care and in improving services for patients, they are not just an altruistic resource! Good engagement will identify goals and benefits for the CCG *and* for PPGs taking part. Be prepared to listen to PPGs and meet them on their agendas.

Work with PPGs to identify the things it would be good to discuss: they will have ideas they would like to explore, as will you. Make sure that meetings are about "real" engagement and involvement. Involve PPGs early enough to co-produce plans and to genuinely influence decisions. If you are not open to doing anything differently after meeting with PPG representatives, then you are not carrying out authentic involvement.

#### 4. Recognise PPG members are volunteers – reimburse travel and consider paying for time

Make it easy for the volunteers you involve.

Most PPG members enjoy being volunteers and this is a part of their identity in their PPG activity. But they do not have an organisation behind them to cover costs, so *proactively* offer travel expenses (and, if appropriate, consider subsistence, childcare etc.) Time given voluntarily still has costs (e.g. time spent not doing other things).

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PATIENT PARTICIPATION

If you pay others for their time (e.g. clinicians), then offer to pay PPG representatives too.

### 5. Recognise and embrace the diversity of PPGs

No PPG will be representative of their entire local community, so don't expect them to be! They will bring you one useful source of views from a set of patients. No PPG should present itself as being the only patient voice, but rather as representing *some* patients' voices. Engaging with PPGs may help you target other resources on harder to reach, seldom-heard groups.

Whilst those involved in PPGs may have personal experience of secondary care health services, the PPG is not there to reflect that secondary care experience, only perspectives on primary care. Recognise and respect this focus. It means you can seek out other patient voices to bring secondary care experience, whilst maximising the primary care focus of the PPGs. Of course, PPGs may be able to reflect the experiences of some patients at the interface between primary and secondary care, e.g. regarding experiences of discharge and post-hospital care.

### 6. Share information in a timely way, in plain English

Build the consideration of involving PPGs into the early planning of *all* engagement activity. It is easier to take it out of plans if genuinely not required rather than to bring it in at a late stage.

When involving patients and their representatives ensure the language you use is inclusive, clear and jargon-free. This is not about "dumbing down", but rather enabling engagement through transparency. Invest in plain English editorial advice, particularly for complex information written in "NHS-speak".

### 7. Make use of Building Better Participation and the resources it links to

*Building Better Participation* was developed through co-production with PPG and practice representatives, with input from some CCGs. It helps frame best practice and hosts links to wide range of publicly available guidance drawn from a variety of organisations. The volume [Influencing beyond the GP practice](#) particularly encourages PPGs to consider how they can play a part in the wider health and care system beyond their GP practice, and may be a useful starter for discussions with PPGs that are new to engagement with their CCG.

### 8. Give it time!

Good engagement and involvement takes time. The tips above are easier to achieve without a looming involvement deadline. If you know you should engage better with PPGs, then allocate some resource to begin to build the relationships to underpin best practice.

And remember: Patients have more to offer health care professionals and policy makers than just their illness!

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PATIENT PARTICIPATION

### **Case Study 2: This is much better!**

*(drawn from an amalgam of real examples)*

*“West Motoring Along” CCG has sought to build a partnership with its local PPGs.*

*In recent months the CCG’s Lay member, with Officer support, has sought to build relationships with local PPG Chairs, including face-to-face meetings and phone calls to introduce himself. The CCG is looking to identify actions they and the PPGs would like to focus on in the year ahead.*

*Following some suggested dates and times, a meeting has been set up next month on a Tuesday evening, as this best suits the PPG representatives. The first part of the first meeting will focus on agreeing how the group will meet (its groundrules), making use of some good practice guidance resources suggested by a PPG Chair. The group will then collectively set an agenda for the meeting and a subsequent networking event.*

*Whilst the venue is relatively central in the CCG’s area of activity, the Lay member has secured a modest travel budget to enable PPG representatives to claim back their travel. He has included a claim form with the joining instructions so no-one has to ask for the form.*

*The CCG is providing Officer support to manage practicalities, including refreshments and being responsible for capturing any actions from the meeting.*

*The Lay member has highlighted two issues that the CCG would like to explore with the PPGs, if they feel they are a good way to use the time, and are of value to the PPGs too.*

*Most PPGs are sending a representative to this meeting. One who can’t attend has sent suggestions for discussion which the Lay member has acknowledged and will make sure are included.*

April 2017