



Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Newsletter

Winter 2026



YOUR PPG IN 2026

Now that the previous Heswall & Pensby and Commonfield Road Practices have merged to form the Myrtle Group, every Myrtle Group patient is part of a single PPG which gives you a voice in what the Practice and PPG do, and how they do it.

Through the PPG, we can share experiences, questions and suggestions with each other and with the Practice.

Together, the Practice and the PPG can help us all to keep up with the frequent changes in NHS primary and community care.

We hope this year to communicate regularly with our fellow patients.

How the PPG works

Any patient who wishes to can participate, and the views of every patient are important.

The Steering Group of about 14 patients manages our work, meeting monthly. A GP and Practice Manager join alternate meetings.

The Virtual Group is for those with something to offer, or who want to keep more closely in touch, but who don't wish to commit to regular meetings.

In joining the Virtual Group, you'll receive by email agendas, minutes and updates from the Steering Group, and may ask it to discuss something that concerns you. You can also ask to attend a Steering Group meeting when an item of particular interest to you is on the agenda.

NOTE

Our email address is for PPG use only. Personal information will not be shared with the Practice except in a case of overriding safety concern.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Information about the PPG and its work is available:

- in the PPG section of the Practice website;
- in the PPG leaflet near the reception desk in your surgery;
- on the PPG noticeboard in your surgery's lobby / reception area;
- through regular newsletters like this.

You can contact the Steering Group by:

- emailing: myrtleppg@gmail.com; or
- dropping a note into the 'Contact the PPG' box in your surgery's reception area, ideally by using one of the pre-printed cards adjacent to the box.

DID YOU KNOW?

If the Practice offers you a telephone appointment, you may request a face-to-face appointment if you would prefer that.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2 – more from the PPG:

- the 2025 Patient Survey
- using the NHS App

Page 3 – news from the Practice:

- a message from Dr Forster
- making full use of the NHS App
- the work of Physician Associates
- data on the use of BLINX / PACO
- a reminder of Christmas!

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- promoting health and wellbeing
- new to the PPG for 2026

THE 2025 PATIENT SURVEY

In April 2025 the PPG conducted its annual patient satisfaction survey with the assistance of Myrtle Group staff. The purpose of the survey was to give patients under the care of the Practice the opportunity to express their satisfaction / dissatisfaction with particular aspects of the service it provides:

- the appointment booking process
- experiences of consultations with various members of the healthcare team
- communicating with the Practice through its website or the NHS app
- satisfaction with telephone consultations
- awareness of the Physician Associate role
- it also set out to ascertain how the NHS App was being used.

Just under 1700 patients responded to the questionnaire.

The Practice was aware of difficulties with booking appointments, so has now changed to the BLINX/PACO system. This is designed to improve appointment booking and gives patients the choice of physician as well as enabling direct access to some other health care facilities without needing GP intervention.

The senior partner has agreed to provide more information on how Physician Associates work alongside GPs (see opposite).

The PPG is working with the Myrtle Group to increase the use of the NHS App.

STEERING GROUP MEETINGS IN 2026

With GP/Manager

Jan: 23rd, 9.30 am

March: 17th, 1.00 pm

May: to be announced

July: to be announced

Sept: to be announced

Nov: to be announced

Steering Group only

Feb: 16th, 4.00 pm

April: 20th, 4.00 pm

June: 15th, 4.00 pm

August: no meeting

Oct: 20th, 4.00 pm

Dec: no meeting

PLEASE LEND A HAND TO THE PPG

Your PPG relies on volunteers, able and willing to give some time to its work. You may have particular knowledge, skills or experiences that can be helpful, or your interest may simply be as a patient.

We need help to help each other so, please, we'd like to hear from you if you can offer to join the Virtual Group or the Steering Group, or to explore other ways you might contribute.

Just email myrtleppg@gmail.com, and we'll take it from there. Thank you.

USING THE NHS APP

The NHS App can help us to keep on top of our medical care. It's clear that the NHS wants it to grow in importance for patients. So how familiar are you with the App?

What you need

Most smartphones and tablets can download the NHS App, or you can use it on a computer / laptop / tablet with your web browser accessing the NHS website. Under-13s are not eligible.

To get going

Download the App or go to the NHS website, set up an NHS login, and you'll connect to the functions available. To make the most of the App, such as seeing your medical records, fill in and return to Myrtle Group the form 'Application for patient online services' available at your surgery reception.

What the App does

The App is useful in many ways. Perhaps the most practical are:

- viewing your GP health record, which includes: a summary of your health conditions and any allergies; of medicines, immunisations and vaccinations; of test results; of consultations with clinicians, and the outcomes. It also shows any important documents related to your health
- requesting repeat prescriptions
- receiving, responding to and viewing a record of messages and letters from Myrtle Group, hospitals and specialists about appointments, referrals etc
- seeing all past and future appointments with NHS services
- using NHS 111 online to answer questions and get advice or medical help nearby.

Proxy access

Parents and carers can manage the App for a child or someone they care for, so long as that person is also registered with Myrtle Group. To request this, fill in and return the form 'Consent to proxy access to GP online services' available on the Practice websites and at your surgery reception.

DID YOU KNOW?

All patients at the Practice are registered with a **named GP**. This is an administrative requirement only and helps to organise care; it does **not** affect your choice of clinician or the care you receive. There's no need to request a change of named GP, as it has no bearing on your access to appointments or treatment. You are free to book appointments with any GP or appropriate healthcare professional within the Practice.

THE PRACTICE PAGE

A MESSAGE FROM DR FORSTER

Dear Members of the Patient Participation Group.

On behalf of the entire team at Myrtle Group, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to you all for your continued dedication, support, and valuable contributions to our Practice.

We greatly appreciate the time and effort you invested in planning last year's Patient Survey, encouraging participation, and compiling such a thoughtful and comprehensive report. Your work has provided us with valuable insight into our patients' experiences and expectations, and it will be instrumental in helping us identify areas for improvement and build on what we do well.

In response, we have recently introduced a GP-led total triage system to ensure patients' problems are directed to the most appropriate clinician as efficiently as possible.

Your continued commitment to representing the voice of our patients is something we truly value.

Thank you once again for your enthusiasm, professionalism, and partnership. We are very grateful for all that you do to support our practice and our patients.

With warm regards,
Dr Stephen Forster
Senior Partner, Myrtle Group

MAKING FULL USE OF THE NHS APP

We are supporting a campaign to encourage patients to turn on notifications in the **NHS App**, so you don't miss important messages such as appointment updates, test results, or Practice announcements.

Patients can enable notifications by opening the **NHS App**, going to **Settings**, and switching **Notifications** on. You should also check your phone settings: on **Apple (iPhone)** go to Settings > Notifications > NHS App and allow notifications; on **Android** go to Settings > Apps > NHS App > Notifications and make sure they are enabled.

Turning on notifications helps patients stay informed and improves communication with the Practice.

PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES

When you contact the surgery, you may be offered an appointment with one of our **Physician Associates (PAs)**. We have PAs working across both surgery sites. They are highly trained healthcare professionals who work as part of the GP team to provide timely, high-quality care.

Physician Associates can:

- take medical histories and discuss your concerns
- carry out physical examinations
- diagnose and manage many common conditions
- request and review tests, such as blood tests
- provide advice on treatment and ongoing care

PAs work closely with our GPs and other clinicians and **will** arrange a GP or specialist appointment if needed.

Seeing a Physician Associate helps improve access to appointments, reduces waiting times, and ensures you are seen by the most appropriate clinician.

HOW BUSY IS THE BLINX / PACO 'DIGITAL FRONT DOOR' INTRODUCED LAST AUTUMN?

The figures below show how much use patients are making of the new online arrangements for requesting appointments and other Practice services.

	Received from Patients	Completed by Staff	Total forms submitted
Sept 2025	4,269	1,143	5,412
Oct 2025	4,655	1,336	5,991
Nov 2025	4,209	1,612	5,821
Dec 2025	4,252	1,363	5,615
Jan 2026	5,195	2,931	8,126
TOTAL	22,580	8,385	30,965
	73%	27%	

DO YOU STILL REMEMBER CHRISTMAS?



It feels quite long ago now when the staff at the Telegraph Road surgery did a great job in cheering us up with a beautifully-decorated Christmas Tree in the reception area. No sign of Santa Claus in the building, just the gift of attention to patient wellbeing.

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A PPG can play an important part in helping Practice clinicians, and the NHS more broadly, with the vital job of keeping people as healthy as possible. That's good for us directly as individuals and, indirectly, brings benefits by minimising demand on services for those with health needs beyond their own control.

We are currently working on one such concern.

Reducing falls: Balance and Stability

In 2024 the North West Ambulance Service visited over 90,000 people because of a fall, with over 63% going to hospital.

As we age, our chances of having a fall increase, but we can reduce the risks.

So the PPG and Myrtle Group are working together to make sure that older patients are informed about the importance of balance and stability. This work includes:

- Direct communication: the Practice will be texting all registered patients aged 65+, introducing the initiative and including a link to an instructional video (<https://tinyurl.com/2782bxej>).
- Clinical reinforcement: GPs and nurses will be giving information and advice to at-risk patients during their consultations.
- In-Practice materials: informative pamphlets will be available on request at your surgery.
- Community engagement: we're planning an information point at a local supermarket for one afternoon to reach local patients.

Exercising safely and effectively at home is important. You can search for 'Physical activity guidelines for older adults' on the NHS website, which supplements the instructional video mentioned above.

NEW TO THE PPG FOR 2026

When you visit your surgery's reception area you'll soon see on the wall a black box labelled 'Contact the PPG'. With it is a supply of pre-printed cards.



You can use a card to get in touch with the Steering Group to: ask a question; make a comment or suggestion; offer praise or indicate a problem with Practice services; ask about joining the Virtual Group or Steering Group; make an offer of help; etc ...

This secure box is exclusively for the use of the PPG. It is checked every couple of weeks by a member of the Steering Group. Please include your contact details. We will respond to all messages, respecting your confidentiality. Personal information will not be shared with the Practice unless there is an overriding safety concern.

USEFUL TIP

There's a huge amount of help and advice about local health and care services on the Wirral InfoBank website – www.wirralinfobank.co.uk. It covers care and support for adults, children and families, mental and physical health, and much more.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you have a hospital or clinic appointment and are asked "Who's your GP?" or "What GP Practice are you registered with?" the answer now is "Myrtle Group". Sometimes you may have to explain the merger of Heswall and Pensby with Commonfield Road.

HELP US WITH OUR NEWSLETTERS!

Please let us know of the sort of news and information you'd like to see in future issues.



The PPG Steering Group wishes everyone a happy and healthy 2026



The Myrtle Group

<https://myrtlegrouppractice.nhs.uk>

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PPG contact: myrtleppg@gmail.com