



Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Newsletter Spring / Summer 2026



Heswall and Pensby Surgery



Commonfield Road Surgery

WELCOME TO OUR SECOND ISSUE IN 2026

What's been happening since the Winter Newsletter?

We've received interesting and positive responses to our previous newsletter. Several extra patients have recently joined our Steering Group, creating a better gender balance overall. We're grateful for these offers of help, and look forward to the fresh contributions.

The Virtual group (see the back page) is also beginning to take shape.

From reception in either surgery you can pick up a leaflet explaining how the PPG works. Several local libraries, pharmacies and other health-related businesses locally have kindly made the leaflet (and copies of the newsletter) available at their premises – thank you to them.

Cards in the boxes

Some patients have begun using the 'Contact-the-PPG' cards in reception areas to get in touch with us. (See the back page about this.) The process for responding to and acting on these is now working smoothly – apologies to anyone who fell foul of initial technical difficulties with the PPG's new email address.

A concern in some comments is about how the Practice coordinates action following referrals to other clinical services (X-rays, blood tests, hospital appointments etc) that require follow-up such as medication changes or further consultation. One person noted 'how complicated the process has become, for patients and for staff.'

At the May Steering Group meeting with a GP and practice manager we summarised the comments received and asked how greater clarity for patients might be achieved.

Steering Group March meeting

We heard from Grace Perry, who works for the Primary Care Network (PCN), concentrating on neighbourhood health promotion. Her talk prompted interesting discussion about strengths and weaknesses in community health support. On page 2 you can read about the PCN and its work. The NHS is putting more emphasis on primary and community care; the PCN will be important in that shift of focus.

The Practice Manager told us of a number of staff changes, clinical and administrative, and agreed to clarify on the website which Myrtle GPs are partners in the business (accountable holders of the contract with the NHS), and who are salaried GPs.

We were given information about planned vaccination programmes, and discussed car parking at the surgeries. Practice staff also agreed to revise its 'Friends and Family' feedback process in order to make it more helpful to the Practice as it acts on patient comments.

PLEASE NOTE

Communication from Practice to patients will now rely more on email and the NHS App, as the use of text messages is being limited by cost. If you don't currently receive emails from Myrtle Group, it's important to check that the Practice has your up-to-date email address.

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OUR PRIMARY CARE NETWORK (PCN)

Since 2019, groups of GP Practices have been working together in 'Primary Care Networks'. PCNs make available to patients a wider range of services and skills than a single GP practice could offer – for example, by collaborating over evening and weekend consultations, and providing a focus on community health beyond the scope of one GP service. A PCN is perhaps able to be more outward-looking than an individual Practice.

England has around 1,250 PCNs, each covering, on average, about 50,000 people. Our PCN – 'Healthier West Wirral' – brings together Myrtle Group and four other Practices (Greasby, Marine Lake, Upton, and the Warrens). Its joint Clinical Directors are Myrtle's Dr David Jones and Dr James Perry from Marine Lake Practice, supported by a management and coordination team. For more detail, see <https://healthierwestwirralpcn.co.uk>.

What does the PCN add to services?

Our PCN directly employs eight Physician Associates (whose work was described in our last newsletter) plus an Advanced Clinical Practitioner, and seven Social Prescribers (see page 3). Some are attached primarily to one or more of the member-Practices.

PCN services also include:

- two acute visiting GPs;
- six pharmacists and six pharmacy technicians;
- a five-strong nursing team with a focus on patients who are housebound with chronic diseases, and on those with learning disabilities or severe mental health needs;
- a team of Paramedics and Physician Associates who visit patients with acute needs and frailty concerns in their homes;
- clinical support from a multi-skilled team for residents and staff in the 24 registered care and nursing homes in the PCN area;
- pre-bookable evening and weekend appointments, offered at each of the member-Practices on a rotating basis;
- providing vaccinations to patients who are housebound, in a care home, or have complex needs; this improves uptake in high-risk groups and reduces pressure on GP surgeries.

Holding everything together

More staff and more services across five Practices inevitably make coordination around individual patients more challenging. PCN staff work closely with member-Practices. All PCN interactions with Myrtle patients are recorded in our patient medical records, which we can each look at with the NHS App.

How do patients access PCN services?

The GP team may refer you to PCN staff – pharmacists, physician associates, social prescribers etc. You can book evening and weekend appointments via our Practice in the normal way.

And the future?

Describing health and social care as '*fragmented and, at times, chaotic*', the government recently issued a plan called the 'Neighbourhood health framework'. Its ideas, long talked about, include:

- joining up NHS services with local authorities' social care and public health services: '*Neighbourhood health puts the person at the centre of how we deliver their health and care by organising services [to] work together ... rather than [for] organisational convenience*';
- linking GPs with community, local authority and charity / voluntary services as 'Integrated Neighbourhood Teams' for a specific area of roughly 50,000 people, and creating '*250 new neighbourhood health centres*';
- more focus on health promotion and the prevention of ill-health;
- improving access to, and continuity of, care, and reducing waiting times;
- putting more resources into neighbourhood teams rather than into hospital care;
- reducing pressure on hospitals and care homes.

The 'Framework' doesn't say much about 'How?'. It stresses that '*These reforms will need to be led locally. ... It is for local providers, Integrated Care Boards and local authorities to work through what is right for ... their communities*'.

So where might PCNs fit into the scheme? In principle, it might make them more important. Grace Perry recently joined our PCN as 'Neighbourhood Health Engagement Lead'.

Grace is working with the Social Prescribing team, and meeting community organisations such as MENCAP, Wirral Food Bank, Dementia Together, MIND, and many more, developing ways of working together for patients' benefit.

What do you think?

The 'Framework' says '*we promised to give power to people*'...'*listening to and working with patients...and communities will be central*'. **So how will that happen?**

Meanwhile, if you'd like to ask a question or make a suggestion, you can email the PCN at cmicb-wi.hwwpcn.admin@nhs.net or the PPG Steering Group at myrtleppg@gmail.com. We'll be interested to know your thoughts.

THE PRACTICE PAGE

A MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERS

At Myrtle Group we are proud to care for people from all backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. We ask everyone using our services to treat fellow patients and our staff with kindness, respect and tolerance at all times. By working together, with understanding and courtesy, we can help create a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for everyone in our community.

SOCIAL PRESCRIBERS

Supporting our Patients and our Practice

Our Practice now has Social Prescribing Link Workers as part of our PCN team. They support patients with non-medical issues that can affect health – such as loneliness, housing worries, money concerns, stress, or caring responsibilities. They are an important part of how we deliver holistic, person-centred care for our community.

Social prescribers give patients time, understanding, and practical support, helping them access community groups, charities, wellbeing activities, and specialist services. This personalised approach helps patients feel more confident, connected, and supported.

Social prescribers reduce pressure on GP appointments by helping patients whose needs aren't primarily medical. They work closely with our clinicians and reception team, ensuring patients get the right help at the right time.

You may be referred to the social prescribers by a clinician, or you can request to be referred into their service by completing a BLINX/PACO health form.

SURGERY CAR PARK REMINDER

The car park at the Heswall surgery, reserved for those attending at our surgery or Heswall Clinic only, can become very busy. Keeping spaces available helps with access for those with mobility and health difficulties or limited transport. We appreciate everyone's cooperation in helping us keep parking available for those who most need it.

BEWARE OF THE SUN!

Enjoying the sun is healthy, but without taking precautions it also has risks. According to Cancer Research UK, melanoma skin cancer rates have increased by almost a third over the past decade.

There's good advice on sun safety. Have a look at: [Sunscreen and sun safety - NHS](#) or [Sun safety | Reduce your skin cancer risk | Cancer Research UK](#).

ADVICE ON IMPORTANT VACCINATIONS

Shingles, RSV and Pneumococcal Protection

Vaccination is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from serious illness. The NHS offers several important vaccines to eligible patients, particularly older adults, young children, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions.

Shingles Vaccine

Shingles is a painful rash caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. The vaccine helps reduce the risk of developing shingles and long-term nerve pain.

The shingles vaccine is offered to:

- all adults turning 65;
- adults aged 70 to 79;
- adults aged 18 and over with a severely weakened immune system.

The vaccine used in the national programme is Shingrix and most people require two doses for full protection.

RSV Vaccine

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a common virus that can cause serious chest infections in older adults and babies.

The RSV vaccine is currently offered to:

- adults aged 75 to 79;
- pregnant women from 28 weeks of pregnancy to help protect their baby after birth.

Pneumococcal Vaccine

The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect against serious infections such as pneumonia, meningitis and blood infections. It is recommended for:

Adults aged 65 and over

Everyone is offered one dose at age 65, as older adults are at greater risk of severe pneumococcal disease.

Babies (routine childhood programme)

- first dose at 16 weeks;
- booster dose at 1 year;

Children and adults aged 2–64 at higher risk

People with certain medical conditions may require one or more doses. This includes those with:

- problems with the spleen or no spleen;
- sickle cell disease or coeliac disease;
- chronic lung, heart, liver or kidney conditions;
- a weakened immune system (for example HIV, chemotherapy or long-term steroid treatment);
- cerebrospinal fluid leaks;
- certain occupations such as welders or metal workers exposed to metal fumes.

If you think you may be eligible for any of these vaccinations and have not yet been invited, please contact the practice team for further information.

JOIN IN (from the comfort of your own home!)

The PPG has a **Virtual Group** for those who want to keep more closely in touch with our work, but without committing to regular meetings.

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

To join, please email your request to – myrtleppg@gmail.com.

HAVE YOU SPOTTED A BLACK BOX?

A reminder that one way to contact the PPG Steering Group is by looking for the black 'Contact the PPG' box in your surgery's reception area. Fill in one of the pre-printed cards and drop it in the box, which is checked regularly by a member of the Steering Group.



Make a suggestion; offer praise or mention a problem with Practice services; ask about joining the Virtual Group or Steering Group; offer to help the PPG; etc ...

PLEASE LET US KNOW

We're particularly interested in hearing your experiences with any of the following:

- telephoning the Practice for making appointments, asking questions, etc;
- the time you have to wait for a clinical appointment, blood test etc;
- understanding your personal patient records, if you access these online.

Please email us (myrtleppg@gmail.com) or use a black-box card.

STEERING GROUP MEETINGS AHEAD

With GP/Manager

July: 22nd, 2.30 pm
Sept: to be announced
Nov: to be announced

Steering Group only

June: 22nd, 4.00 pm
August: no meeting
Oct: 20th, 4.00 pm
Dec: no meeting

USEFUL TIP

'One Wirral' Community Interest Company exists to help bridge gaps in health services. Its aim, by collaborating with a variety of NHS, charity and voluntary organisations, is to remove barriers to health and wellbeing. It therefore fits well with the current focus on primary and community care, and with the work of the PCN (page 2).

To see its range of activities, look at its website www.onewirral.co.uk, where you can also find out how to get in touch with its team.

MAKING THE ONLINE WORLD EASIER

A Myrtle patient has kindly told us about a project run by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to help people become more confident with using online services, including those of the NHS – and the NHS App in particular.

You can find their four-page guide to 'Accessing Healthcare' at: <https://tinyurl.com/2uzdnbxf>. The Practice has printed out some copies of this guide, available from reception at both surgeries.

We are also reminded that some Wirral libraries, including Heswall, have volunteer 'Digital Champions' who will help people with digital issues such as the NHS App. It's a drop-in service. For details, see <https://tinyurl.com/367by32e>. It's worth phoning your library first to check availability.

In the next newsletter we hope to bring you a little more information about other sources of digital help.

WORDS FROM THE WISE ...

... perhaps to our new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, trying to improve services.

'The achievement of simplicity and clarity is not easy. It means shaving away constantly at the sort of multiple objectives which we normally like to set ourselves.'
[John Harvey-Jones, *Making It Happen*. 1988]

HELP US WITH OUR NEWSLETTERS!

Our next newsletter will be in the autumn. So please tell us (myrtleppg@gmail.com) of the sort of news and information you'd like to see in future issues. Not everything in the health and care services is easy to explain, but we'll do our best.



The PPG Steering Group wishes everyone a wonderful warm summer!



The Myrtle Group

<https://myrtlegrouppractice.nhs.uk>

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