

Waterloo Patient Participation Group

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the standard at which all communications between the Practice, its patients and other external persons will be conducted, and how this will be incorporated into the various forms in which communication can take place. This policy is in place to ensure where clear and timely communication between all practice staff, and with patients and other care providers is of critical importance in delivering quality communication services.

Communication Standards

The following standards of communication will be adhered always, whatever the method of the communication:

- Patients and visitors will be dealt with in a positive, efficient manner;
- Communication will be delivered in a timely fashion, and in a format relevant to the information being given;
- Information will be in plain language which is easy to understand cannot be misinterpreted. Use of jargon and unknown abbreviations are to be avoided;
- Communication will be open and honest, with further explanation given where decisions made give rise to additional queries;
- All communication with patients and visitors will be consistent with the Practice's policies, protocols, and procedures;
- All general patient communications will ensure they reach the correct member of the PPG in the appropriate format in a timely fashion.
- Personal opinions will not form part of communications undertaken as a member of the PPG.
- All communications will be carried out in a professional manner.

Communication Methods

- Face-to-face;
- Telephone;
- Letter;
- E-mail;
- Website.

Policy

Face-to-face

- Where face-to-face meetings are requested:
 - when existing Practice patients contact the surgery asking for the PPG a response will be given as soon as possible after enquiry. A meeting date will then be confirmed.

Telephone

- Where the person being asked for is not available, an appropriately detailed message is taken, including: name and address of caller; telephone number; details of query; time when call back is convenient; and then passed on to the relevant person as soon as possible.
- All people answering calls on behalf of PPG/Practice will be polite, positive and efficient towards any person who calls the Practice or when calling externally themselves;
- When calling externally, PPG members will ensure they are speaking to the correct person before divulging any information.

Letter

All PPG members will consider the following points when receiving, writing, or sending any letter:

- Letters received will be opened and forwarded to the relevant person immediately, where necessary they will be scanned and shared electronically to ensure timely receipt;
- Reply to letters received will be made by the appropriate PPG member within 7 working days;
- All outward letters will provide a named contact in-case of query, complaint or if a response letter is required;
- Any contact details given e.g. telephone numbers, email addresses or land addresses will be those of the PPG. Members should not divulge their private contact details
- Any instructions and directions given will be clear and concise.

E-mail

The PPG has a Gmail email account that receives emails:

- There will be a dedicated PPG member who will monitor this mailbox endeavouring to reply to all emails received by the PPG within a couple of working days;
- Emails received will be forwarded to the appropriate PPG member and a response indicating this sent to the initial sender.
- All outward emails will provide a named contact in case of query, complaint or if a response letter is required;
- A direct telephone number will be provided where possible; (see above)
- Any instructions and directions given will be clear and concise;
- E-mails will only be used where this is deemed appropriate for the message being sent. In certain circumstances a telephone call or face-to-face meeting may be more beneficial.

Website

- The most up-to-date newsletter will always be featured;
- Information about the work of the PPG will be kept up-to-date;
- Links to other relevant service providers will be posted.