

Primary Care Group Volunteer

Background Information

The Healthwatch Primary Care (PC) Group consists of around a dozen volunteers who are interested in ways that they can assist Barnet Primary Care service providers to improve their services to patients. The group meets monthly and also has a small number of sub-groups made up of volunteers from the PC Group and also other co-opted volunteers who are interested in helping with a project of particular interest to them, but are not able to commit to being a full member of the group and some may prefer to work from home.

Much of the work the PC Group relates to GP Practices but we also look at for example, dental and pharmacy services, and any issues relating to primary care.

Some of the projects carried out by the group:

- The Group has developed a leaflet showing patients the alternatives to A&E (Accident & Emergency) when they need medical advice or treatment. This has been adopted by a number of practices who are currently using this tool.
- We undertook some mystery shopping to 50 Barnet dental practices investigating the availability of NHS dentistry and the lack of clarity around charging policies. This has triggered further work into availability of dental services by Public Health in Barnet.
- We talked to cancer patients about their transport to and from treatment centres and issued a report highlighting their issues and recommending improvements.
- We explored difficulty in accessing podiatry services, and particularly toe nail cutting for older people was raised by local residents. We undertook a survey about this and investigated local services and, as a direct result, have made recommendations to the Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Public Health to improve this situation.
- We spoke to more than 200 patients visiting Barnet Hospital about their experiences there. The main concern was about transport to, and parking at the site.

Our published reports can be seen on our website
www.healthwatchbarnet.co.uk

The main activities for the PC Group volunteers are:

- Identify primary care issues to be brought to the group for further discussion
- To participate in discussions about primary care services and how the group can assist in improving these.
- To help plan and carry out research and investigations into Primary Care services in Barnet.
- To assist in sharing 'Good Practice' with services of interested parties.
- To assist in outreach work with minority community groups to investigate any issues they are facing.
- To keep abreast of public opinion and current trends in Primary Care-related services.

The volunteer group meets monthly and is supported by the staff team at Healthwatch Barnet.

Group members are required to attend this monthly meeting (approximately 2.5 hours per month) which is currently held on a weekday morning depending on availability of the group members. They are also needed to be able to devote approximately 2/3 hours per month to assist with investigations or research as required.

Individual members of the Primary Care Group are automatically 'friends' of Healthwatch and are accountable to Healthwatch and at all times will work to the policies and procedures of Community Barnet and Healthwatch Barnet. They are required to act in accordance with the Healthwatch Code of Conduct regarding standards of behaviour in public life, policies and procedures of Healthwatch Barnet and to uphold its reputation and values.

As volunteers there is no entitlement to payment for the services provided but reasonable expenses incurred will be reimbursed in accordance with the Healthwatch Barnet's Expenses Policy.

Key Skills and Requirements for the Role

- Some knowledge and understanding of primary care service provision. This could be through working in a particular service area or a general understanding/experience as a carer or service user (patient), or from an interest in this area.
- Commitment to improving the lives of others and the ability to represent others' views and not just your own.
- Good interpersonal skills with the ability to work within a team.
- Good communication skills and the ability to talk and listen to people from all walks of life.
- Understanding of the importance of confidentiality and ability to respect this at all times.
- Basic IT skills and the use of email.
- Able to commit at least the equivalent of approximately 1 day a month to volunteering in this role.
- Volunteers are required to undertake a standard level DBS check.

Sub Group Members

From time to time we will be looking for volunteers who are interested in assisting with projects of interest to them, but are not in a position to join the main group and would perhaps to work from home. We will advertise these opportunities via the Healthwatch Newsletter and are very pleased to consider volunteers who would like to contribute on this basis.