

YOUR VOICE, YOUR NEWS

Patients’ Participation Group for the Sid Valley Practice

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This is my first issue as Chair of the PPG. Chris Gill reached the end of his 2 year term at our AGM in April and it was with a heavy heart that we waved him goodbye.

Chris has led the Group with enormous enthusiasm and we will miss his drive. Ann Worthington also reached the end of her term and has stepped



“We hope that our patients are enjoying

the new facilities at our extended practice. We are delighted that we have now also opened up at Sidmouth Hospital after a long wait.”

Joe Styck

Practice Partner

down. Thank you Ann for your wise advice and good sense over your time as a Group member. But we are also happy to welcome two new members, Rosemary Cutmore and Karen Kerley. Take a look at the back page to meet the team.

Summer has finally shown its face. Lighter nights and warmer weather is a good incentive to get outside and enjoy our beautiful countryside. Regular contributor Brian Diffey shares some thoughts on how you can make choices that will improve the quality of your life and make the most of our lovely area.

We bring latest news on changes to the Surgery telephone system and an update on moving into the consulting rooms at the hospital.

Pharmacists can now prescribe medication for a host of common ailments. This should be your first port of call for minor illnesses. [Click here](#) or go to page 2.

where you see a [blue](#) word, you can click for more information.

All views expressed are those of the author or the Patient Participation Group, not the NHS or Clinical Commissioning Group.

Phone system update

No one likes sitting on a phone listening to music while you wait for someone to pick up. The surgery phone system is being updated to include a callback option. This will mean you will be able to hang up when the system tells you and you will get a call when its your turn in the queue.

It’s fully automated so you won’t be relying on someone to see you have called and remember to ring you back.

Give it a go and listen to your own music while you wait rather than the surgery’s!

This new system will go live very soon – listen out for the new messages when you call in



LATEST NEWS

The branch surgery at Sidmouth Victoria Hospital is open for business! Call in or ring the usual number to book appointments



Self care

A range of common illnesses can be treated with a well stocked medicine cabinet or plenty of rest.



NHS 111

Call NHS 111 free if you need medical help advice, but it is not a 999 emergency.



Pharmacy

Provides local confidential, expert advice and treatment for a range of common illnesses.



GP

For expert medical advice, medical examinations and prescriptions for illnesses.



Minor injury unit/urgent care centre

Offers access to a range of treatment for minor illnesses and injuries, including broken bones.



Emergency Department or 999

These services should be used in an emergency, a critical or life-threatening situation.



Get the right care, in the right place, at the right time



Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group

Making choices

How to stay active and healthier longer by Brian Diffey

For most people life progresses along this pathway, unless they've been unfortunate to have experienced some life-changing injury or illness in their early years.



The green zone is when we're healthy and living independently, bouncing back to full health after minor illnesses that come our way. By the time we reach our 60s, we move into the orange zone where the consequences of ageing, which start in our 30s, begin to catch up with us – maybe aching and painful joints or problems with our waterworks. However, for most of us, these niggles don't stop us remaining independent and leading full lives. Finally, we enter the red zone of dependency, where we rely on help with things like our personal care or shopping, and we make more use of medication and medical intervention to keep us going until we pass away.

But for some people, their journey through life looks more like this:



The niggles of ageing begin a few years sooner, dependency sets in at an earlier age and life expectancy is reduced. There are, of course, factors like deprivation and poverty that can play a big part in the lives of some people but all too often we follow this pathway because of our lifestyle choices. A pathway such as this not only limits our enjoyment of life but also impacts on society as a whole. Medical and social services are already overstretched, mainly as a result of looking after people in the red zone, and this leads to pressures on primary and social care as well as long hospital waiting lists.

But what if you'd like a journey through life looking more like this:



where you can keep your independence and enjoyment of life for longer, spending less time in the red dependency zone before reaching the end of the road?

Well, maybe it's time to take control of your health and wellbeing by:

- reducing your risk of developing disease - by keeping to a healthy weight and not smoking (or giving up if you're already a smoker), for example;
- getting more exercise, even if you already have one or more long term conditions, by taking advantage of our glorious coastline and countryside; and
- adopting a positive and optimistic attitude to life, its problems and opportunities, and making use of the many activities and clubs available to older people here in Sidmouth.

By encouraging more of us to try and follow this pathway, not only will we get more pleasure out of our time here on Earth, but we reduce the burden on our health and social services – so everyone in society benefits. Of course, a healthy lifestyle doesn't guarantee a life without serious illness but it does reduce the odds.

If you're interested in finding out more about living well, then take a look at the book "Sod 70! The guide to living well" by [Muir Gray](#) – and despite the title, it's never too early to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Most pharmacies can help you with **seven common conditions** without needing a GP appointment

Speak to your pharmacist if you suspect you have:

- **Sinusitis**
(adults and children aged 12 years and over)
- **Sore throat**
(adults and children aged 5 years and over)
- **Earache**
(children aged 1 year to 17 years)
- **Infected insect bite**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Impetigo**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Shingles**
(adults aged 18 years and over)
- **Urinary tract infection**
(women, aged 16 to 64 years)

Visit your Pharmacy First!

NHS
Providing NHS services

Meet the team

In this issue we interview one of the admin team



Gillian is the Vice Chair of the Patients' Participation Group (PPG), but she may be more familiar to you as a member of the Medical Reception team. We had a chat with her to find out what it's like working on Reception.

Q: Hi Gillian, thanks for talking to us today. Tell us a bit about yourself.

Gillian: Hi. I've lived in Sidmouth since 2012 and I've been a member of the PPG for a couple of years now. I was the main carer for my dad for 8 years until he died in 2022 at 96. Naturally, over that period, I had a fair bit of contact with the local health services.

Q: How did you come to be working as a Medical Receptionist at the surgery?

Gillian: I was volunteering at the surgery as a PPG member, doing call-outs to book people for seasonal flu jabs. While I was doing that, I could see the number of calls coming through to the phone lines. I wanted to offer some kind of practical help, and figured the only real way of doing it was to join the admin team and answer the phones!

Q: So what's it like on the front line?

Gillian: We are the patient's first line of contact with the surgery. We aren't a massive team. Usually there are 2 people on the Reception—one of whom is probably also answering calls. We have a couple of people handling prescription requests, a Duty PA who helps the daily Duty Team dealing with urgent medical requests, probably 2 people handling phone calls upstairs and someone managing the letters and online enquiries that come in.


Q: We hear a lot about how long it takes for phones to be answered. If there are 3 people picking up calls why is the holding time so long?

Gillian: It's worth bearing in mind that the time of day can be a factor. The surgery lunchtime is generally 1-2. Over that period there might only be one dedicated call handler. Some calls can be fairly complicated and we want to give callers the time to be listened to. A lot of calls could be avoided completely. For example, register online to get your own test results. Another common phone call is to make a prescription request. We don't take these over the phone—imagine if we made a mistake? If you do as much as possible online, requesting your repeats in plenty of time, and making the most of your local Pharmacist, it will free up calls. Pick your time of day as well. Later in the afternoon is good—unless you want to speak to the Duty Team, when the earlier the better! But try not to leave it until almost 6pm! The new phone system should improve things for patients

Q: You are also Vice Chair of the PPG. What sort of things does the group get involved with?

Gillian: We are a group of patients who meet with the Practice staff to understand how the surgery works and to help the surgery understand the issues that patients face. I've already mentioned that we do volunteer from time to time, like booking seasonal vaccinations. We also take real-life patient experiences to address things that have happened—good and bad—so that the Practice can build on these experiences and use the learning to improve the way things work. We also produce this newsletter—and we welcome ideas for future articles.

We are always looking to attract new people to the group. We are looking for enthusiastic people who want to get stuck in to help to improve the way the Practice works. You need to have basic IT skills—all our papers are distributed by email—and you need to be prepared to handle confidential information. If anyone out there is interested in finding out more they can get in touch with us through the Practice. Or keep an eye open for me and collar me for a quick chat when you see me.

 Had a test recently? The surgery will only contact you if the test shows a problem. Use the [NHS app](#) or [online services](#) to see your results without having to phone up.

Your PPG—your voice

A reminder of your PPG members



Jan Barrett
Chair



Gillian Mitchell
Vice Chair



Rosemary Cutmore



Salma Chowdhury



Brian Diffey



Sharon Drew



Karen Kerley



Ann Liverton



Rebecca Selby



Joe Stych
Practice Partner