

Setting up an online PPG



Every GP Surgery has a Patient Participation Group (or PPG) and these give patients the opportunity to give their views when, for example, changes are proposed in GP Surgeries. Not everyone is able to attend meetings; perhaps because of family or work commitments, but this doesn't mean you can't get involved.

Some GP Surgeries also have an online or virtual PPG and this allows them to gain the views of a wider group of patients and gives you the chance to have your say. You can become involved as little or as much as you want and give your views at a time that suits you.

Who runs the Online PPG? Usually it is the Patient Participation Group with the support of the GP Surgery.

How does it work? Once you have given your email address the PPG will send you information about the different ways you can get involved - they may also send you surveys if they are planning on making any changes in the Practice, newsletters and information about events or what's happening in the Surgery.

So if your GP Surgery is interested in setting up an online or virtual PPG, what next? It's not difficult, but you do need to be methodical and organised. Here are some helpful tips to get you started.

- **Set up a free email account with a suitable address** - the obvious choice is to choose something like nameofpracticePPG@mail.com. There are plenty of free email providers to choose from.
- **Give the practice manager at the Surgery the passwords and logon and username details** - this will allow for the online PPG to run smoothly in the event of the PPG Chair stepping down and illustrates why it is so important not to use personal email addresses.



Have your say
your way...



- **Buy a memory stick for saving data and put together a data policy** - in the policy include information on the data you are collecting, where it is stored and what are you using it for. You only need email addresses of your online PPG members.
- **Decide on how to collect patient email addresses** - there are different ways you can do this, you can use a survey, or request form. You need to use a system which also records the patient's agreement to be contacted, along with a way of allowing them to be removed if they request it. In the policy it is wise to explain that there is NO connection with any patient records held at the surgery. When collecting email addresses make sure they are accurate and legible.
- **Communicate with on-line members** - send new members a welcome pack, invitations to meetings, events, newsletters, and information on changes at the surgery, surveys and reminders. Include information on what the online member can expect to receive. Make sure you add a removal clause so that someone can easily opt out of receiving emails (software packages like Mail Chimp will enable you to do this and the basic package is free). Don't contact online members too often as people may start to feel pestered if you contact them too much.
- **Use the right browser** - some web browsers have built-in features which help you to keep people's email addresses private. Contact MCVS or AVA to find out more.
- **Blind copy ALL emails.** This will ensure online members are not able to see who else is a member.
- **Tips on sending emails to large groups** - the simplest way of sending a group email to lots of different people is to prepare a list of email addresses with each email address separated by a semi-colon. This list can then be cut and pasted into the BCC box which means that each person will only see their email address.
- **Need help?** Contact Sarah Taylor at Ashfield Voluntary Action ☎ 01623 555 551 or Lesley Watkins at Mansfield CVS ☎ 01623 651 177.

What if my GP Surgery doesn't have an online or virtual PPG? If enough people express an interest your Surgery may consider setting up an online PPG.