

YOUR HEALTH matters



How you can help improve healthcare

West Berkshire Patient Panel is just one group looking for ideas to make experiences in GP surgeries and hospitals better

DO you sometimes wonder, when you're sitting in a doctor's surgery, or waiting at the hospital, that something could be changed to make your healthcare experience better?

Maybe you have an idea about tweaking the appointment system, GP opening hours or suggestions to improve the way staff sort things out.

Well, there are lots of groups out there who act as a link between patients, their families and the health service and it's very easy to get involved and have your say. Here we showcase some of them.

We start with an introduction to the West Berkshire Patient Panel and details of how to become a patient leader.

Patient panels are the eyes, ears and voices of patients - they work in partnership with GPs, surgery staff and healthcare partners like the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group, West Berkshire Community Hospital (WBCH), Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH), Healthwatch and Berkshire Healthcare Trust.

The West Berkshire Patient Panel has had a number of success stories.

- Improvements to the appointment system at WBCH and the RBH
- A new blood testing appointment system
- More consultants using WBCH, where there is also more parking available
- Introduction of lunchtime opening of the pharmacy at Chapel Row Surgery
- Extended hours at GP surgeries*

Patient leaders are linked to local hospitals and help influence the healthcare agenda at a local, strategic level.

They work in partnership with others to help design services and systems of care and improve patients' experiences.

This could include ward inspections, sitting on interview panels and joining committees.

There is quite a rigorous selection process and a training programme made up of seven



workshops covering things like:

- Effectively influencing the quality agenda
- Working collaboratively with others
- Improving patient care and experiences

There's more information at

<http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-involved/patient-leaders.htm>, <https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/get-involved/our-patient-participation-and-groups/>

Here's a few other groups you could think about joining to get more involved in your local health service:

Patient Participant Group (PPG)

What is it? All GP surgeries are required to have a Patient Participation Group (PPG) which liaises with patients and feeds back their views to the GPs and surgery staff.

This could be through surveys, engagement events or ad hoc contacts.

Many PPGs also support the surgery in other ways, such as fundraising.

Who's it for? Anyone can be a member.

What do you do? You would be

kept informed through newsletters and invitations to open meetings.

How to get involved: Check the website at your surgery or ask at reception.

Member or governor of Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust (RBFT) or Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT)

What is it? These NHS trusts have members who are kept informed about any developments or plans and can elect governors, who help hold the trust to account.

Who's it for? Anyone can apply to become a member and there's little or no commitment required.

Governors are elected and have to attend regular meetings, so this is a considerable commitment.

What do you do? As a member you'll get an occasional email and may be asked to vote for governors.

How to get involved: See the website: <http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-involved/members.htm>, <https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/get-involved/our-members-and-governors/become-a-member/>

Healthwatch

What is it? Healthwatch is the patient and public champion for health services and social care. It identifies general issues and lobbies for change, but doesn't take up individual cases.

Who's it for? There are different roles to suit anybody.

What do you do? Initially, sign up for the newsletter to keep informed.

If you want to volunteer, you could help at engagement events, join 'Enter and View' visits to care homes or health centres or help behind the scenes.

For some roles there is a selection process and training is required.

There are occasionally vacancies for the board which helps run Healthwatch.

How to get involved: See the website for details - <http://www.healthwatchwestberks.org.uk/>

The Oxford Academic Health Science Network (AHSN)

What is it? The AHSN covers Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

It's one of 15 networks in the country bringing people like researchers, industry, the public and healthcare representatives together to promote innovation.

Who's it for? There are 'lay partners' opportunities for which you have to go through an application process and have a certain level of knowledge and ability.

The AHSN provides training for people who want to participate in other ways, not just through the



AHSN

What do you do? As a lay partner, you might sit on committees, comment on documents or help organise events.

How to get involved: See the website for more information: <https://www.oxfordahsn.org/our-work/patient-and-public-engagement-involvement-and-experience/>

If you can't commit to getting involved in any of these, you can still have your say.

Write, email or phone up the relevant healthcare body to express your opinion or provide feedback.

If you've had treatment at a hospital or doctor's surgery, ask for a 'Friends and Family Test' form to fill in.

You can also register your views of treatment on NHS Choices (find the service then click 'Leave a Review').

You could also respond to consultations and attend events looking at key decisions facing health bodies or local councils.

These are advertised in the local press or check out the websites: www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk; www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk; www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk; www.healthwatchwestberks.org.uk

Or you could attend a public meeting held by organisations like the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group, the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Healthwatch.

Key papers are available from their websites and you can normally submit questions in advance.

*Remember you can now make routine appointments for evenings and weekends.

Go to www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/enhanced-gp-access for more info.



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Kamal Bahia

Tell us what you think by emailing Kamal Bahia, chair of Patient and Public Engagement Group, West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board - ppe.chair@nhs.net