

Firs Patients Group: Terms of Reference

1 Introduction

GP practices have a responsibility to involve patients in issues relevant to the practice and to respond appropriately to patients' views and experiences. The name of the group is The Firs Patients Group.

2 Our Purpose

- We are a two-way channel between the practice and its patients and carers. Our purpose is to seek patients' views and support the practice by suggesting how services and facilities might be improved.
- We will act as an advisory body for The Firs and will represent patients' views and work to see that patient, carer and public concerns are taken into account so that services are provided in an appropriate, safe, effective and timely manner.
- The patient group shall be non-party in politics and non-sectarian in religion.
- We are NOT the channel for patient complaints. There is a formal complaints procedure for the Firs that should be observed. Ask for a copy of it at reception in the surgery.

3 Our Objectives

We aim to help the practice communicate and build positive relationships with its patients. Our core objectives are:

- To improve two-way communication and co-operation between patients, carers and staff to the benefit of all.
- To support the continuous improvement of service delivery by the practice.
- To represent the needs and concerns of the patients and to support the clinicians and staff in their work.
- To act as a sounding board to ensure that the needs of patients, carers and practice staff are considered in the development of practice systems – for example, the appointment and telephone systems helping patients understand such systems.
- To assist the practice from time to time by offering support where appropriate.
- To provide a forum to discuss changes that affect the practice.
- To invite guest speakers occasionally.
- To review and, where appropriate, provide advice and recommendations on the practice's annual patient survey.
- To ensure that patient information and advice on access and practice services are readily available and clearly presented.

4 Membership

- Is open to all registered patients over the age of 16.
- Practice staff and speakers and others can be invited to the whole or part of a meeting, as appropriate.

- Removal of a patient from the practice list, for whatever reason, will disqualify continuing membership of the patient group.
- On registering for the group, new members will be asked to provide contact details and to confirm that they are willing to allow these details to be stored in an electronic database and used solely for purposes connected with the group's activities. The database will be managed and maintained in a way that meets requirements of UK legislation relating to data protection.

5.1 Meetings

There will be three types of meetings:

- Open meetings – at least one a year, open to all members – *see below*.
- Annual meetings – one a year, open to all members – *see below*.
- Executive committee meetings – at least four meetings a year – open to executive committee only – *see below*.

5.2 Behaviour at meetings

- No member shall disregard the rule of the chair, wilfully obstruct business, or behave aggressively, offensively or improperly.
- Members should respect the opinions of others and behave in an orderly manner, observing the group's ground rules.
- All members have an equal role to play in contributing to the workings and discussion of the group.
- Members should make every effort to be punctual for meetings.
- Items that are confidential should be declared and should not be discussed by any member outside the group.

5.3 Open meetings

- At least one a year.
- Will normally last no more than 90 minutes – unless otherwise stated.
- Will be open to all registered patients over the age of 16 and will be publicised on the practice noticeboard, on the group's website, via email to members, and by other online routes.
- The agenda and papers will be circulated by email five days in advance of each meeting. Agendas and minutes will be posted on the group's noticeboard at the Firs, on the group's website and sent by email to members.
- All members will be required to respect rules of confidentiality and not discuss personal or sensitive information (and any such information will not be recorded in minutes).
- Members wishing to attend meetings should contact the secretary before the meeting to confirm their intention to attend.

5.4 Annual meeting

- The annual meeting is open to all registered members of the group. A minimum of 21 days' notice of the meeting shall be given to all registered patients and the practice staff – via the group's noticeboard, website and email.
- At this meeting, members of the executive committee will be elected and the group's terms of reference agreed and amended if/as necessary.
- All members present at the annual meeting will be entitled to vote. An annual report will be presented. Other general business may be conducted at the discretion of the chair and subject to notice being given.
- Quorum: decisions at annual meetings require consent by 25% of members or five people who have registered as personal or executive members. If a decision cannot be reached through mutual agreement or by those present and voting, then the chair has the casting vote.

6 Executive committee

- Management of the group will be undertaken by an executive committee consisting of four members of the group: the chair, deputy-chair, secretary and assistant secretary.
- The executive may co-opt other members for specific tasks.
- The executive will be elected at the annual meeting.
- The executive committee will meet at least four times a year.
- The chair may request the practice's senior partner, another partner and/or the practice manager, to attend meetings, as the executive considers appropriate.
- Sub-groups may be created to address specific tasks or research, with set time-frames and goals. Once these are achieved, the sub-group will cease to exist.

6.2 Executive committee roles

Chair:

- To run group meetings – on time / following the agenda.
- To run meetings of the executive and the AGM.
- To motivate and encourage the group to maintain momentum and direction in a friendly and productive way.
- To represent the group and liaise with the practice partner or manager on agreed action items and other matters as they arise.
- To ensure progress is made on any agreed actions punctually.
- To ensure the group adheres to its objectives, rules of engagement and terms of reference.

Deputy chair

- To support and liaise with the chair.
- To chair any meeting at which the chair is unable to be present and in doing so assume all the roles of the chair.

Secretary

- To keep an attendance register at meetings.
- To take adequate notes at all meetings and publish minutes to all members within 5 days of a meeting.
- To book meeting rooms at the practice for the regular meetings of the group, and any other patient group related meeting.
- To provide efficient and reliable secretarial support to the group as required.

- **Assistant secretary**
- To support and liaise with the secretary
- If the secretary is unable to attend a meeting, to take notes, produce and distribute minutes, book meeting rooms, and essentially deputise for the secretary.

7. Amending the terms of reference

The terms of reference may be amended by a resolution passed at an annual meeting by a majority of at least two-thirds of the members present and eligible to vote, three weeks' notice of the proposed amendment having been given.

The terms of reference were most recently amended on 21-02-2018