



Benfleet PCN PPG Summer Edition

All you need to know about your Benfleet Primary Care Network and Patient Participation Group (PPG).

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Summer edition and as I write this in June, that sun has really arrived! Please stay hydrated, use suncream, and take care in the heat. And, if you print off this newsletter, you can even use it as a fan! This time, we're excited at two firsts, an introduction to all the Benfleet PCN PPG (your Surgery PPG) members and our first reader article suggestion on how Benfleet PCN, teams up with our district nursing community on Page 7. We were delighted to receive this and encourage you all to come forward with your suggestions - this is YOUR magazine, and we want you to be part of it.

Other articles include

- PCN PPG Activity
- PCN Digital update
- Get U Better App
- Blood Donation
- Thundersley Methodist Well Being Hub
- Outside surgery hours.

CONTACT DETAILS

Let us know your thoughts by emailing benfleetpcn@nhs.net

Rachel and Joanna - Editors.

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MEET YOUR PRIMARY CARE NETWORK PPG

Joanna Masters and Susan Baillie – HIGH ROAD, BENFLEET PPG

Joanna worked in the insurance industry for 37 years, including setting up her own consultancy. After dealing with a long-term health condition and witnessing family

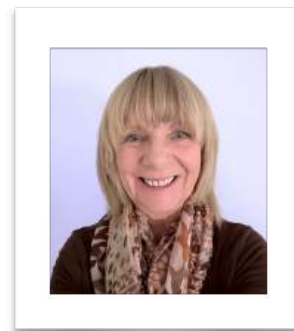
“We must all take responsibility for our health, but medical intervention should be accessible when needed.” Joanna

members face serious health issues within deteriorating NHS services, she wanted to get more involved. She joined the PCN PPG as an extension of her local PPG membership. She is also one of the Editors for this newsletter. Joanna has lived in Castle Point for 25 years and since joining PCN PPG, she discovered many additional facilities and support options previously unknown to her. Benfleet PCN is

constantly promoting activities to enhance well-being and reduce hospital visits. However, the rise in NI contributions negatively impacts GP surgeries

and Primary Care get no benefit from this so it is vital that our PPGs keep informing the community. Joanna regularly attends local events to represent the PCN PPG and is a keen advocate in encouraging patients to join our communications membership.

NOTE: In the last edition, we introduced you to Susan Baillie, chair of Benfleet PCN PPG. **Susan** is also a PPG member of High Road Surgery.

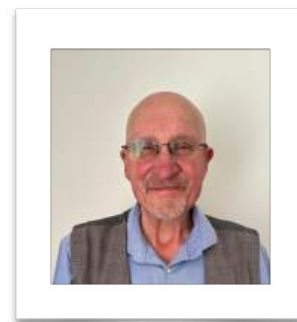


Joe Cooke and Freddy West - HART ROAD, BENFLEET PPG



Joe moved to Benfleet with his wife Joan in 1970 after graduating in Electronics from Liverpool JMU. He retired as a Senior Systems Analyst at Fords Dunton after 34 years and now cares for Joan. Joe served 11 years on Castle Point Council, including seven as Chair of Health & Environment. A former Governor of Southend Hospital, he is active on several health bodies and is a Carer member on the Healthwatch Essex Disability & Carers Forum. Joe also chairs the Hart Road PPG. His involvement in so many care areas is a valuable asset to the PPG.

Freddy has lived with his wife in Benfleet since 1973 and brought his family up here. He had a long career at Royal Mail, then 20 years at Tesco's Pitsea, where he was also a Senior Union Representative. After retiring, he continues to represent Shop Workers as part of the Usdaw Union. (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers). Freddy is also active in organising campaigns to protect and improve our vital public services. He is Deputy Chair of the Hart Road PPG. Joe and Freddy both joined the PCN PPG at its inception in 2022.



“GP surgeries need to educate patients about booking appointments for critical cases only and directing minor issues to other professionals in the Surgery or local Pharmacy. PPGs can assist by providing guidance on accessing these services” Cheryl

Cheryl Kirby, John Hall and Terry Clarke - RUSHBOTTOM LANE PPG



Cheryl began her career with the oil company Shell in their Finance Department as part of their school leaver intake. As a qualified Accountant and after 20 years, she joined Southend Hospital's finance department in various hospitals for the next 15 years. Her work at Southend involved participating in projects that had a direct impact on patient care.

Following her retirement, she remains engaged in local healthcare by assuming the position of Chair for Rushbottom Lane Surgery PPG for several years, before passing the role to John Hall.

Additionally, she serves as a patient representative on various healthcare committees. It was therefore a natural progression to put herself forward as a member of the Benfleet PCN PPG at its initiation in 2022.

"If I could improve one thing for GP services it would be finding an appointments solution for patients who can't attend on the day but cannot wait 4 weeks for the next bookable one." Cheryl

John started working as a craft apprentice, through day-release and night school through to gaining a CEng and MSc degree. After a career in design and construction management, including North Sea oil and gas, he set up his own business, including a multi-million part-funded EU program promoting economic performance. His personal life is blessed with a loving wife, 3 children, 8 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren.

Upon retirement, John sought an opportunity to keep his mind active, and The Rushbottom Lane Surgery PPG provided that. Actively involved for 10 years and serving as Chair for the past three years. Their PPG team has expanded to nearly 500 patient memberships and have initiated several projects. Among these is a monthly magazine which addresses surgery matters and promotes health and well-being awareness, a critical aspect for the NHS amid rising demand. John has also been the Benfleet PCN PPG Deputy Chair since its inception in 2022.



Terry started his career as a 15 year-old apprentice in print and advertising and retired as Account Director managing the design, production, and procurement team for the British Heart Foundation. His most challenging and satisfying role was having to manage the overall rebrand of Norwich Union to AVIVA.

Terry manages Rushbottom's PPG's large membership communications, produces their monthly magazine [UPDATE](#) which is distributed to all members. Following that success, he also created the PCN PPG newsletter for the whole of Benfleet throughout 2024. He is also one of the

"...I would encourage all patients to join their surgery's PPG. It is amazing what you can learn, often things you'd never hear about otherwise." Terry



MSE Hospital Trust's Council of Governors, covering Basildon, Southend, and Broomfield hospitals. Terry wanted to know as a patient, how things worked, decisions are made and was there anything the public are not aware of. By being involved in both these roles, he can help shape and improve the healthcare available, not just for his family but all local patients.

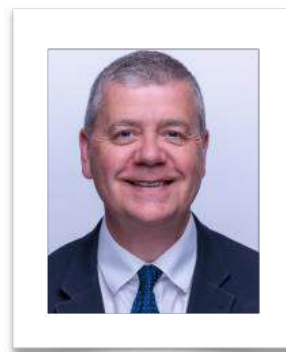
With the increasing number of patients, coupled with the shortage of medical professionals, this is exerting significant pressure on the healthcare sector, Terry is a keen advocate of greater use being made of Accurx and other programs that can enable patients to access healthcare outside of the 8.00 - 5.30 norm. Find out more about available options on Page 8.

Cllr Rob Lillis – ESSEX WAY PPG

Rob and his wife Mandy have lived in Benfleet most of their lives. Their two children also attended the same primary school that Rob went to! With both his mother and his wife's parents living in the Borough, local healthcare is key to his family's wellbeing. Rob currently

"If I could improve one thing for GP services it would be to better the communications between them and their patients." Rob

runs his own banking consultancy, having previously worked in banking for several years. He has also been a school governor, tutor, community group member, fundraiser, and youth football coach so has already played a major role in our local community.



In 2023, Rob was elected as a People's Independent Party Councillor for Boyce Ward and re-elected the next year for St. Mary's Ward. He was then appointed Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Housing. Rob joined both his local PPG (Essex Way Surgery) and the PCN PPG in order to enhance the

understanding of his Cabinet role and appreciates their warm welcome. The lack of capacity is one of the biggest issues that GP surgeries currently face and by being involved in our PPG's, Rob's contribution is a very valuable asset.

Tom Harrison and Rachel Clark – THE HOLLIES SURGERY



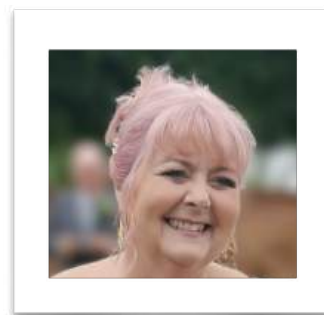
Tom and his wife celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary last June and have 3 sons and 2 grandsons. He retired from the Civil Service as a Shift Commander in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. During his career, he obtained professional qualifications in operational and commercial management. Additionally, he has served as a member of Staffordshire County Council and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management. Since retirement, Tom has been engaged in volunteer work within the local community. His activities include serving as a School Governor, Trustee of Citizens Advice, Castle Point Public Governor for Mid & South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, member of the Southend Branch of Keep Our NHS Public, Deputy Chair of The Hollies Patients Participation Group, and participated in the campaign to Save Our Libraries Essex. His primary motivation is to

contribute towards improving the health and wellbeing of Castle Point residents. He is also a former BJC National Middleweight Judo champion and a Midland Area Kata champion. This isn't a requirement for joining a PPG though!

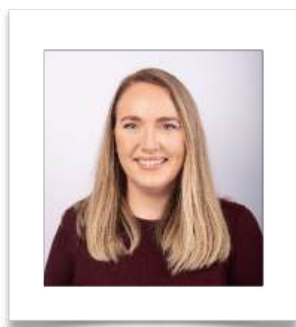
Rachel has lived in Hadleigh all her life and her career was formed in NatWest/Royal Bank of Scotland, where she went from a typist cashier through to a lead specialist in marketing and communications across all sectors, before leaving in 2020. At that

"I hope our PPG communications provide our patients with necessary information, support and contact details that they need for their wellbeing, mental health, and physical activity, beyond the services available at the GP surgery." Rachel

point, she supported her father who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. By keeping him engaged through clubs, outings, family engagements and regular social interactions, she observed how the integration of social, wellbeing, and medical services is all vital to improving the quality of life for both patients and their families and carers. Rachel was also a MSE Trust Governor for Castlepoint from 2014 to 2023, when she decided to shift her main focus to primary care. She still is a member of the MSE Trust Patient Experience group and will soon begin her role as the first Voluntary Patient Safety Partner for MSE NHS Trust hospitals (Broomfield, Basildon, and Southend), complementing her work in primary care. Rachel is a fervent advocate that healthcare is more than just medication and appointments.



Amber Ritchie – CARE CO-ORDINATOR BENFLEET PCN AND PPG MEMBER



Amber has been working in healthcare for over 8 years, working in both clinical and non-clinical settings (St Thomas A&E, cardiac surgery, rehabilitation and renal). Her Mum has been a nurse for 40+ years which inspired Amber to get into healthcare. For last 2 years, she has been part of the excellent PCN Team, Benfleet. She really enjoys her role and is grateful to have great colleagues around her. Amber has seen our PCN model grow and thrive, changing how it manages complex patients and really enjoys building relationships of trust with patients. She joined the PPG as a staff member in order to share what changes can be made or improved within the PCN. Since joining she has seen the hard work that our PPG have put in

to support these changes such as attending local events to raise awareness of the PCN amongst the local community and build their understanding of all the work the PCN undertake, as well as the positive change it makes to people's lives.

What are the responsibilities of a Care Co-Ordinator?

The MSE Trust hospitals or external services, such as adult social care or GPs will refer patients with complex medical needs to the PCN PACT (The PCN Aligned Community Team).

- The Care Co-ordinator contacts the patient with questions which will ensure all aspects of their healthcare is covered.
- Where required, they will arrange an emergency care practitioner to visit the patient's home to assess if any additional support is required.
- Advance care planning is offered to help avoid hospital admissions and when a patient wishes to be treated at home.
- Administrative duties e.g. sending referrals or chasing outstanding follow-ups, liaising with external teams or setting up and joining MDTs.

"It makes me feel great when I hear happiness in a patient or their next of kins voice, because they are relieved to be getting the support they need."
Amber

A story of a PCN success, home and away.

When a patient came to us through a referral in 2023, PCN Benfleet soon became a support system and ultimately more like a friend to a few members of the team. She had multiple health issues, and the team worked extremely hard to ensure she got the correct medications and appointments. She had regular visits from the ECPs as well as the health and wellbeing coach. After some time, she moved away to live with her son to a different county. Whilst very happy to be moving, our patient was very concerned to be out of the care of Benfleet PCN. However, the Care Co-ordinators ensured although she was no longer local, that they checked in for a few months after she had moved to ensure she was still keeping well. This situation reinforces that fact that our PCN Team is about more than just medical care.

PCN PPG ACTIVITY

Event attendance:

1st June Benfleet Community Fayre <https://castlepointcommunityallotment.org/benfleet-community-fayre> and 21st June the Community Mental Health & Well-being Event (the official launch of The [H.O.M.E Hub](#) vision for Castle Point).

At these events, Joanna, John, Freddy, Cheryl, Rachel & Rob have been meeting with our patients, encouraging them to subscribe to this newsletter and join their local PPGs. If you recognise us at future events, please come and say hello. We value your feedback and suggestions for improving our services, which we raise in our PPG meetings.

Forthcoming Event: Sunday 31 August, Hadleigh Community Fayre at John Burrows Recreation Ground, Rectory Road, Hadleigh (11am to 5pm) <https://www.facebook.com/hadleighcommunitygroup>



Guest Speakers

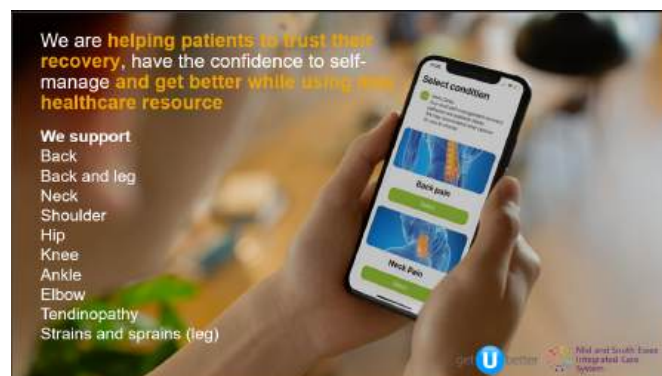
Benfleet PCN Digital Update

We were delighted to welcome Amy Crumpton, Digital and Admin Lead for Benfleet PCN who discussed her role and improvements since joining the team earlier this year. If you visit the Benfleet PCN website, you will see all the great work that Amy has undertaken <https://benfleetpcn.nhs.uk>. She also gives daily support to our surgeries on all their digital requirements. Watch this space or check with our surgery websites to see when the mobile phone appointment invitation links go live. These will enable you to book your own appointments via text. Do not worry though, anyone without a mobile phone can still call the surgery and get support.

GetUbetter App

We also had the added bonus of a 2nd guest speaker, Sean Viljoen who gave a comprehensive and very interesting presentation on the GetUbetter App. If you have a joint or muscular problem, this is your free local support app which is provided alongside NHS care and includes:

- instant and 24/7 support with
- easy to follow exercises
- supports you to recover
- live and work well
- helps when on a waiting list
- advice on when to seek help
- Access to local treatment and services



You can download this app in the normal way or visit their website to find out more. It is tailored to your needs and keeps a progress report for you, with advisory information to ensure it aligns with any NHS care you are receiving. Well worth investigating. GetUbetter – www.getubetter.com/patient/

PCN NEWS

How does Benfleet PCN collaborate with the District Nurse Service?

One of our readers, Mr Jack T. asked about the District Nurse Service (DN) within the PCN service, so we consulted Sofia Goodchild, Benfleet PCN Manager. She explained that the DN team, commissioned by EPUT, is part of our Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). The PCN team refers housebound patients to DN for tasks like dressings, vaccinations, medication initiation, and wound checks.

The DN team also refers patients to Benfleet PCN for prescriptions, acute visits, or other PCN tasks. Both teams collaborate closely, supporting one another's capacity and workload. Each DN team aligns with a specific area/PCN such as Benfleet.

Find out more: <https://www.eput.nhs.uk/services/district-nursing/>

*A multidisciplinary team (MDT) is a group of health and care staff who are members of different organisations and professions (e.g. GPs, social workers, nurses), that work together to make decisions regarding the treatment of individual patients and service users. MDTs are used in both health and care settings.

“The PCN has been my wife’s and my lifeline as we are both housebound. The PCN nursing service has been first class.” Jack T

SURGERY NEWS

Are you a donor or a vampire?

Hopefully not a vampire but you could be a donor! If you've ever had surgery or needed a blood transfusion, you understand the importance of blood donations. NHS needs three blood donations every minute to handle emergencies childbirth and critical treatments and blood supplies in the UK are critically low. Recently, Rachel visited a local blood bank and learned at the time they had only 2 days' worth of Type O and 4 days' worth of Type B blood for our local hospitals; the standard should be 7 days for all types!

We also need more people of Black heritage to grow the number of blood donors with well-matched blood to help those with sickle cell disorder. In recent years, there has been a rise in demand for some rare blood types that are more common in people of Black heritage, including people of Black-African, Black-Caribbean, and Mixed ethnicity.

It was World Blood Donor Day on June 14th to raise awareness and encourage more donations. This is a great way of raising awareness but why wait for a special day to give blood?

If you're fit and healthy, and you're aged between 17 and 65, you can generally give blood. The UK needs around 4,300 donations a day to meet the needs of hospitals and critical care. Men can donate every 12 weeks and women every 16 weeks. Do something amazing and save someone's life today by giving blood. You could make it a friends and family event too! <https://www.blood.co.uk/why-give-blood/>

A kind smile and a cuppa are the best free medicines.

Terry recently attended a coffee morning at Thundersley Methodist Church, Kennington Avenue, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 4BS. This is part of their health and wellbeing hub's social events. Regrettably, the event had low attendance, so we wanted to do a shout out on this and all their other events that might tempt you to drop in. Please go along - it's amazing how friendly chat, shared laughter, and a cuppa can uplift the spirit and brighten the day. As they say, **‘Where strangers feel at home and old friends meet.’**

Thundersley Methodist church Hub events

DAY	TIME	ACTIVITY	COST
MONDAY	10am-11am	Chair Fit Exercise	£2 includes tea and biscuits
TUESDAY	11.30am-1.30pm	Hug in A Shrug - Join us to crochet blankets that will be donated.	Free
TUESDAY Every other week	2.30pm	Afternoon club	Free
WEDNESDAY <i>Stephen Sedge from Carers First* runs a drop in clinic every first Wednesday of the month.</i>	9am-11am	Coffee morning and Free food bank	Free
WEDNESDAY - (DUE TO START LATE JULY)	1pm-3pm	Crafty cake and coffee	Please check website for start date
WEDNESDAY – 2 nd Wednesday monthly	7.30pm - 9pm	Healing Hearts – for those who have lost a loved one before the age of 60	Free
2nd Saturday of the month	10am-12pm	Coffee morning	Free

*Carers First is an organisation which support all carers

After hours Surgery services

As Terry flagged in his profile there are options when the surgeries are closed, other than rushing down to A&E for situations which are not critical.

These are:

- Out of hours appointments:
 - Available from 6:30pm to 8pm on weekdays, and from 9am to 5pm on Saturdays.
 - The appointments available are **pre-bookable** as well as available for **on the day booking**; there are no walk-in appointments available within this service.
 - **To book an out of hours appointment, contact your GP practice in the usual way.** They will advise you on appointment availability, and which healthcare professional is the right person to help you.
 - Your appointment **might not be at your regular GP practice**. When you book, you will be told where your appointment is.
- [NHS App](#) - The NHS App gives you a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services.
- [GetUBetter](#) - support for joint or muscular pain
- [Accurx](#) - Patients can use this to request GP advice, without the need to contact their practice face-to-face or by telephone.

The out of hours are available because the Benfleet PCN asked local people for their preferences. They wanted more GP and nurse appointments on weekday evenings and weekends. In response, we now offer an additional 15 hours of GP and 13 hours of nurse appointments each week (subject to bank holidays and training times).

Thank you for reading all our news.

We have now introduced to you all our PCN Colleagues and your PPG members. Please continue to encourage your friends and family to sign up to our newsletter via **BenfleetPCN@nhs.net** and do come and say Hello to us if you spot us at any local event.