

Newsletter

Issue 5: Summer 2013

WELCOME TO OUR SIXTH NEWSLETTER!

Paul Hopper, who has been Chairman since the inception of FCHC has stepped down. He worked very hard to get FCHC up and running and we are very grateful to him. We are pleased however that he will continue to give us the benefit of his experience and advice on the Committee.

We are also delighted to welcome Henry Gewanter as our new Chairman. He brings a wealth of experience to this role. He is a volunteer for the Chiswick Horticultural & Allotments Society, where he is now also the Chairman. He also works in the field of Public Relations which will be invaluable to FCHC. He has said that "I think the main thing is that I believe in the importance of the National Health Service and the need to support the people who look after us in our local health centre, particularly now when the system is changing, government budgets are tight and some cuts to service will inevitably have to be made somewhere".

From the Chairman of the Friends of Chiswick Health Centre (FCHC)

I'd like to start my first newsletter to the members with a formal thanks to my predecessor, Paul Hopper, for all his hard work in setting up and Chairing the FCHC over the last few year. I'm grateful for all his efforts in the past - and even more grateful for recently introducing me to his key NHS contacts and his offer of continuing help and support to me and the FCHC in the years ahead. He's been an inspirational leader and I can only hope to come close to achieving similar success going forward.

I'd now like to update you on recent progress and developments:

HOUNSLOW CCG'S PPG MEETING

I represented the FCHC at a Hounslow Clinical Commissioning Group 'Patients Participation Group' (PPG) looking at treatment for long-term conditions. As the head of Hounslow's Diabetes group was present, it mainly focused on that particular ailment, although others will also be covered in more detail in future meetings. It appears that Hounslow has the worst incidence of Diabetes in the country - which is one of the reasons they want to focus on that illness first.

Following the meeting, we circulated the Questionnaire and flyer they drafted to our members and the feedback you provided was very much appreciated by them - and has helped demonstrate that we are one of the most active, best-organised and most helpful and responsive Patient Participation Groups in the entire borough.

They are also looking for more PPG involvement generally, and are consequently looking to help other doctors' practices to set them up. I have volunteered to assist them (both the CCG and PPGs) with practical advice on marketing, promotion and public relations.

CHC DOCTORS MEETING

Paul and I met with doctors representing each of our health centre's practices (Brigitte Unger-Graeber for Chiswick Health Practice, Bruce Gerry for West4 GPs and Preethi Venkatesham for Chiswick Family Doctors).

Aside from a general discussion (in which I reaffirmed the FCHC's desire to assist them in their work), there were a couple of topics of concern:

The first issue was the extension of the CHC: they had planned to build an additional 'Portacabin' type structure to the side of the building to provide an additional room, but because construction work hadn't started before the end of the financial year, there was no longer a budget for it. We discussed the pros and cons of such an extension, as well as alternatives. Since the foundations are, apparently, insufficient to support a roof extension, I suggested they look into the feasibility of digging out the basement (to replace the existing car park) and putting a wall around the ground floor to provide an entire extra floor of useable space. It seems that money has now been found to finance the upgrade and it has gone out to tender, so we expect further involvement in the process.

The second (and third) issues concerned Phlebotomy (blood tests) and a treatment room nurse for it: the doctors felt they were being asked to take over these additional services (currently funded elsewhere) but were already facing a £30,000 budget shortfall.

Paul and I undertook to raise these issues with Sue Jeffers.

MEETING WITH SUE JEFFERS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUNSLOW CCG

Paul introduced me to Sue and, as per my meeting with the CHC doctors, we both had a general discussion and tackled specific topics of concern (on both sides).

Sue started off by advising us of the new NHS structure - which, although there are still some inevitable teething problems, aims to be a much more efficient, productive and patient-led system (all to the good). She also outlined the new ways in which money flows into and through the system - which has its own pros and cons.

Keeping it simple, the situation with our Phlebotomy and practice nurse has now been solved with a temporary 6-month stopgap solution (Phlebotomy will be funded by Hounslow & Richmond Community Healthcare, but the practice nurse will also have to deal with, eg. wound care) - following which there will be another wholesale restructuring of the funding system for the NHS, including new 'capitation rates' (the 'price per head' paid for each patient) and contracts for doctors (which she anticipated will be a difficult series of negotiations).

Sue also reiterated the theme raised at my earlier CCG meeting: that PPGs will form a more central plank in future. As FCHC is one of the largest and best organised PPGs in the Borough, she raised the possibility of asking us to help coordinate things from the patients' perspective for Chiswick generally, which I offered to do if needed. (I also offered to assist her with marketing, promotion, PR, etc. - as well as with lobbying central government/the NHS for funding if needed in future.)

It was, in summary, a very useful, friendly and productive introductory meeting - and I believe Sue will be an important ally rather than an adversary going forward.

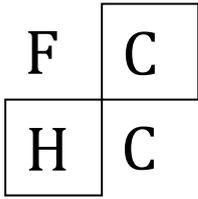
THE FUTURE

Although we have made some useful contacts and resolved the short-term issues and concerns raised, there are significant changes afoot for our doctors and the National Health Service as a whole which could have serious negative effects on the CHC and its ability to provide us with healthcare.

I therefore believe it essential that we build our membership now, so we're able to support the people who look after us in our local health centre and to respond forcefully in the future when needed - particularly now that the system is changing, government budgets are tight and some cuts to service will inevitably have to be made somewhere.

I would, therefore, be grateful if you would ask all your family, friends and neighbours to join the FCHC now - which is open to everyone and completely free of charge - by sending them this link to our website: www.fchc.co.uk

For those without access to the internet you will find a membership form on the next page. If you know of anyone who would like to join us, please feel free to give him/her the form.



Friends of Chiswick Health Centre

www.fchc.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP FORM

PLEASE PRINT

NAME:

ADDRESS:

Email: (PLEASE PRINT)

Donation (voluntary): £ _____

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COMMUNITY RECEPTION IN CHC OR SEND TO 20
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