**What are Patient Participation Groups (PPGs)?**

PPGs are unique partnerships between patients, GPs and their practice which is essential to, and results in, high quality and responsive care. They are:

• patients working with a practice to improve services;

• varied to suit local needs; and

• based on cooperation.

Patient participation is not:

• a forum for complaints;

• a doctors’ fan club; or

• a time-consuming activity for practice staff.

The PPG requires a regular commitment and individuals thinking of joining the PPG should be aware that they would need to be available to attend regular meetings usually every 4 – 6 weeks and have access to email.

PPGs work by building a relationship between the Practice and its patients that breaks down barriers and shares information. PPGs determine their own activities according to the needs of the community and the practice itself.

**Benefits of a PPG include:**

Importantly PPGs can develop to influence the wider NHS, most notably the decisions that are made on behalf of patients about the services that are to be available to them by working with the Practice to:

• contribute to the continuous improvement of services;

• foster improved communication between the Practice, NHS and its patients;

• help patients to take more responsibility for their health; and

• provide practical support and help to implement change.

Based on co-operation PPGs are Good for patients because:

• Patients will be more responsible for their own health

• Patients will have a better understanding and knowledge of the Practice and its staff

• Patients will be consulted about arrangements for their primary healthcare before decisions are made

• Patients will benefit from improved communications with staff

• Patients will have a forum to suggest positive ideas and voice concerns.

Good for Practice staff because:

• GPs and their staff will be able to plan services jointly with patients in order to increase their effectiveness.

• They will be able to help patients with non-medical and social care issues

• They will be able to get help from patients in meeting targets and objectives.

• They will have a forum to voice concerns, ideas and suggestions to patients

• They will get closer to the community for whom they care

Good for the community because:

• Patients will have an organisation through which they can identify their own needs

• Patients will be able to get an idea of what is needed to improve healthcare, and make sure that the patient view is always represented