

THE **NHS** YOUTH FORUM'S  
TOP TIPS *to INVOLVE*  
*YOUNG PEOPLE in*  
**PATIENT PARTICIPATION**  
**GROUPS (PPGs)**

This guide has been developed with the help of young people and has been written and designed by the NHS Youth Forum.

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Children and young people make up nearly 25% of the population in England, 40% of all primary care activity relates to children and young people.

15% have a long term condition, 6% have a disability, 50% of all mental health problems in adulthood start by age 14 and 700,000 are young carers<sup>1</sup>.

These statistics give a clear overview of some of the health needs of children and young people and highlight why listening to young people is so important. As current users of NHS services as well as future patients and health professionals, it is vital that the NHS involves children and young people in shaping and improving services. Young people want to get involved in your practice!

This short guide gives GP practices a range of ideas about how to involve young people. All GP practices have Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) or other community involvement groups, why not use some of the tips in this booklet to make sure you hear from young people who use your services?

### The NHS Youth Forum's top tips to involve young people in Patient Participation Groups (PPGs):

- Tell young people about your PPG – advertise!
- Reach out and engage
- Host an event
- Ask young people for their views
- Invite young people to meetings, or find creative alternatives
- Use social media
- Work with partners
- Take part in local community events
- Provide feedback
- Listen to young and respect their views



# Tell **YOUNG** PEOPLE about **YOUR PPG-ADVERTISE!**

- Develop young people focused posters to put up in reception. Advertise the PPG openly and clearly – give examples of previous successes and how the PPG has made a difference. Make sure you explain what a PPG is in a way that is easy for young people to understand and avoid jargon!
- Develop a short leaflet to hand out to young people at appointments explaining what a PPG is and how young people's voices can be heard by the practice. The leaflets and posters could also be shared with local schools and colleges.
- A welcome pack could be given to all new GP patients, explaining the services available at the surgery. It should include information about the PPG, how to get involved and how people can feedback to the practice outside of the PPG. Even if the welcome pack is aimed at all patients, it should still be user friendly and easy for young people to understand.

- Tell young people about the PPG at the end of their GP or nurse appointments (only if it's appropriate).

*Tip: You could get young people involved in the design of the posters, leaflets or welcome packs – link up with a local school, let them know about your PPG and ask them to design something that would attract other young people to get involved or find out more.*

# REACH out & ENGAGE



- Asking young people to come to meetings isn't always the best way to involve them. There are lots of existing young people's groups (youth groups, guides and scouts, schools, colleges, local hospitals with children's wards). Why not bring your meeting to where young people are already meeting up? Arrange to visit a number of existing young people's groups to hear about their experiences of care and ideas on what is working well and what can be improved. The local schools, community centre or youth services will be a good place to start – they will have contact with lots of existing youth groups.
- Make sure you engage with existing young people's groups where young people who have poorer health outcomes are represented. For example – make links with local young carers' groups, young people in care forums or your local Youth Offenders Team, there may also be local groups for patients with specific conditions e.g. young epilepsy or asthma groups.

# HOST AN EVENT

- Attending regular meetings isn't always easy or convenient for young people. Why not host a community event a few times a year and invite the local community to come and give their ideas and views about the practice? Either hold an event specifically aimed at young people, or make sure that young people's interests are considered as part of the whole event and they feel welcomed and included. Make sure that the event happens at times suitable for young people and other community members and is in a suitable location, for example weekends or school holidays. Consider if you can use a local church hall, or community centre or is the GP practice reception area big enough for a small event?
- A 'Health Festival' event could focus on wellbeing and help people to manage long term conditions as well as involve people in the practice. Work with partners and local volunteers (for example youth groups, Healthwatch, Mind) to bring information stalls to the event.
- A top tip from lots of youth councils and forums is to offer food and refreshments as part of the event. Why not ask local cafés or public health leads to get involved and demonstrate how to create healthier versions of popular food? This can also provide a learning opportunity for young people and help them gain knowledge to keep themselves healthy.

## Example

In Cornwall and Devon nursing students from Plymouth University were linked to 25 PPGs to test a new, mutually beneficial approach to improving PPGs. Students needed to evidence understanding of patient involvement and learn how to involve people in practice, whilst PPGs needed younger people and new ideas to broaden their membership. Students helped to run health information events, including a sexual health information session, assisted with social media and gave talks at local schools. The Patients Association assisted the university in linking up students and highlighted the need for coordination and good communication between PPG chairs and university staff. This project is now mainstreamed into a wider patient participation programme at the university and some of the students continued to be part of their own PPGs after their course finished.



# ASK **YOUNG** people for their **VIEWS**



- It seems an obvious one, but make sure that you ask for young people's views and feedback. Many young people don't know that their views count! It's important to make it clear that you encourage feedback from young people and that you take it seriously. Provide a range of different and creative feedback opportunities. For example;
  - Promote the friends and family test feedback forms, have them available in a young people friendly format (there are some templates here <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/fft/fft-inclusive/> make the forms available online,
  - Or, make a visible, creative and enticing suggestion box and put this in reception,
  - Encourage email feedback, or develop a survey specifically for younger patients,
  - Hold a poster competition for ideas to improve the surgery for young people.

# Invite **YOUNG PEOPLE** to **MEETINGS**, OR find **CREATIVE** alternatives



- Meetings aren't for everyone but some young people do like to attend and be part of the group. If you are inviting young people to take part in the PPG meetings please make sure that meetings happen at accessible times (evenings, weekends).
- Explore ways to hold meetings in young people friendly venues or ways – for example the meeting could be held at a local school, straight after school finishes.
- Use technology! Meetings can be held via Skype and online webinars, they can include people who aren't able to be in the room, but don't forget that the chair of the meeting needs to make sure that people joining online are fully included in the meeting discussions.
- Ensure future meeting dates are easily accessible online so that young people can find out when the meeting is happening in advance.
- Support a 'drop in' approach to getting involved – not all young people want to agree to a regular series of meeting commitments but still wish to contribute. By offering a drop in approach, young people can feel welcome to attend, but are able to contribute more informally.
- Publish the minutes or agendas of PPG meetings on the practice website so that young people (and other patients) can comment on and contribute to the agenda without having to attend every meeting.

## Example

In Cornwall a PPG worked with a primary school to gather younger people's views. The children produced a play about their experiences of going to the GP which was made into a short video (<https://www.patients-association.org.uk/projects/our-projects/patient-participation-groups/>). The children had a range of great feedback about the reception process, waiting area, availability of toys and attitudes towards ageing and children. The head teacher was really pleased to be asked to get involved and highlighted ways to ensure young people are included.





# USE social MEDIA



- Have a Twitter and Facebook account for the practice and encourage online feedback. The practice can also post ideas about improvements and changes and test the ideas with patients before implementing them.
- Have a wider online community group that supports the PPG's work. This group can receive minutes and newsletters and be invited to input and comment on issues via email.
- It is important to note that when using social media, don't just broadcast messages, it is usually a two way communication and engagement mechanism and you need to get back to people (in the most appropriate way) where people are raising issues or asking things.



# WORK with PARTNERS

- If you don't know where to start to reach young people then think about reaching out to local partners. There are local schools and lots of voluntary sector organisations that support young people in local communities (e.g. Barnardo's or Action for Children); contact them and talk to them about young people's involvement and ideas for improvements. Hearing about projects and ideas from partner organisations may inspire you or enable you to adapt them for your PPG.
- The local Healthwatch will also be connected to lots of community members and many have a local youth Healthwatch group you can find your local Healthwatch online [www.healthwatch.co.uk/](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/).
- If you are worried about not having the right skills or training to work with young people, get some support from local partners with expertise in working with young people. You can talk to youth group leaders about the issues that you want to discuss and they can bring the discussion topics in creative and youth friendly ways and then feedback to you.

"Having a YPPG at the surgery has helped to highlight the needs of those young people in our practice population and ensure that we are mindful of how they find out about our services so that we can best meet this need. It is so great to see the interest and enthusiasm of the YPPG and to have peer advocates to inform us and to help publicise the services at the practice."

Dr Helen Kingston, Senior Partner,  
Frome Medical Practice



# Getting INVOLVED

## - making a DIFFERENCE

Youth Forum member Susie shares how setting up a Youth Patient Participation Group (YPPG) has given young people in Frome a role in shaping their local health services...

After dropping some Youth Forum posters into Frome Medical Practice, they contacted a friend and I about setting up a YPPG for the practice, to which we said a big YES! Our first move was to go into our school and give talks in assemblies inviting students to take part. We held our first meeting at the medical practice after school, to make sure people were free to attend.

We had four people initially, and discussed the purpose of the group and the kind of things happening at the practice and in the local community to do with young people's health, such as the youth drop in clinic, sexual health advice, and school nurses.

At the second meeting six people came along and we talked about people's experiences of the medical practice and mentoring/support programmes in schools. We now have around 15 members who circulate and attend meetings when they can, but that number is increasing!

One of our YPPG's first tasks was for members to go 'mystery shopping' at the youth drop in clinic, with each 'agent' seeking different services or advice. We gave feedback on our experiences at our third meeting - and as a result we've been asked to redesign the drop in clinic's information leaflet/card.

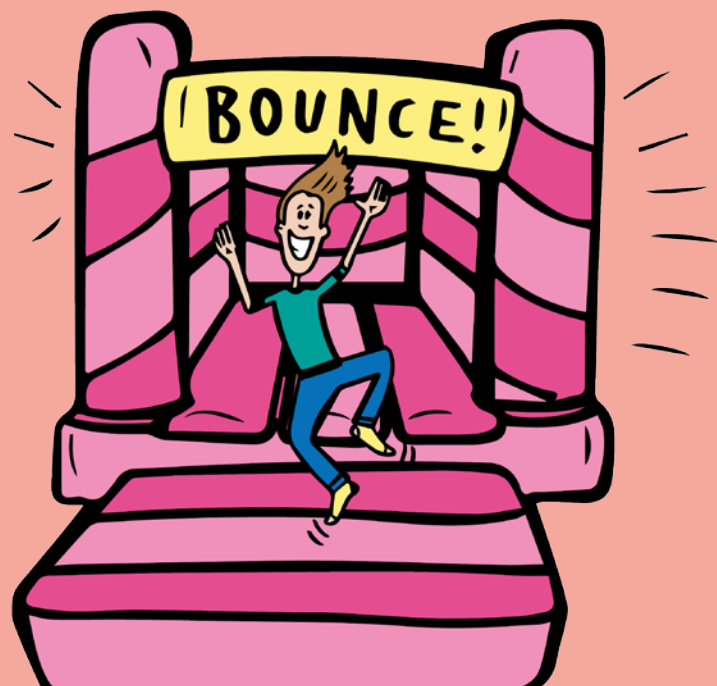
Since then representatives from Dorothy House hospice and GPs from the practice have come to our meetings. We're now planning to meet young refugees living in Frome to talk about the youth clinic, getting grants from the council for gym membership and other 'good to know' stuff about the area. We have also been contact by a GP looking to set up a project/campaign on improving young people's self esteem in the area.

The YPPG has got young people more interested and involved in health issues - which has benefited them, the medical practice and the local health services.

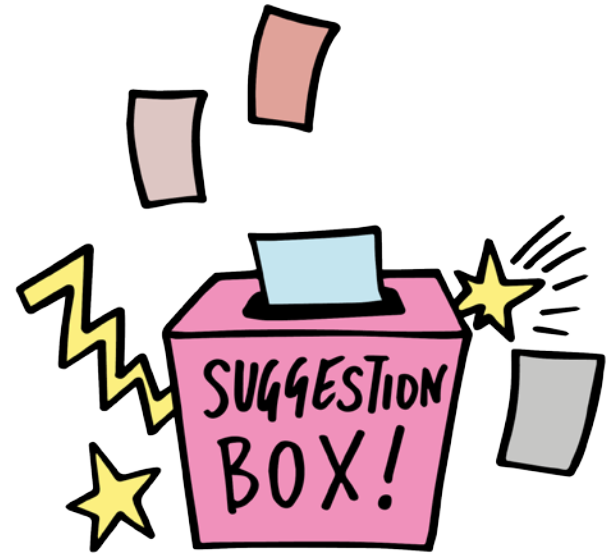
**FAMILY  
FUN  
DAY!**

# TAKE PART *in* LOCAL *Community* EVENTS

- Attend community events that are already happening. Lots of communities have summer family fun days or community festivals. Take some information about your GP practice, health awareness information and most importantly of all information about your PPG. Talk to families and young people attending the event.
- Building up good relationships with local schools and colleges will help you engage with young people.
- Schools and colleges often have career or work experience fairs. Go along to these events; it's a great opportunity to promote involvement in the PPG and get young people thinking about the wide range of NHS careers available. Consider offering work experience or volunteering opportunities to students; it will be much appreciated by the school/college and the young person and the practice will benefit from their insight. PPG and practice members can really inspire young people.



# PROVIDE FEEDBACK



- Don't forget to tell young people what happened as a result of their suggestions this will encourage people to stay involved, feel proud and keep focused on further improvements.
- Use social media to promote the PPG's achievements and provide updates.

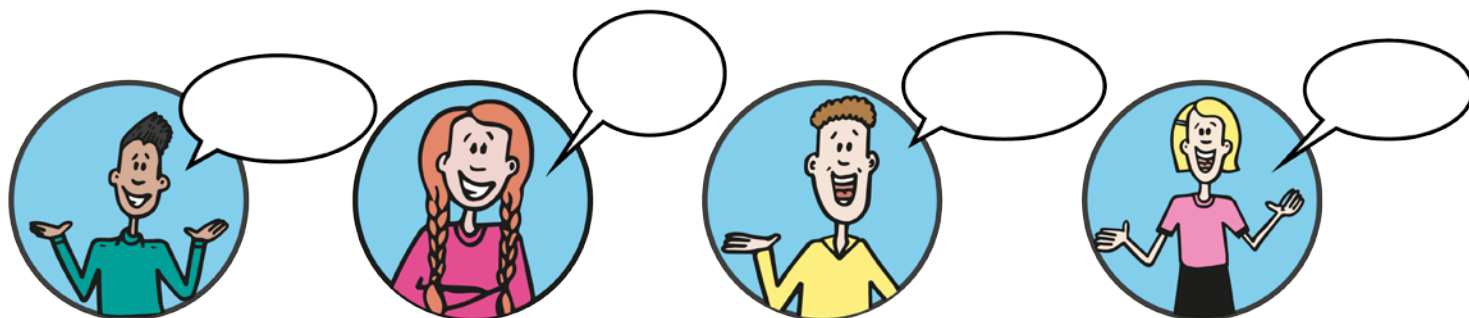


# Listen TO YOUNG PEOPLE & RESPECT their VIEWS

- Young people want to be involved in their health care. They have ideas and want them to be taken seriously. Consult them!
- Be genuine when you involve young people. It can be very hurtful and disempowering if they are part of a group and they can see that their input isn't fully valued. Young people understand that not every idea can be taken forward but they do want to be involved in prioritising suggestions for improvement.
- Young people are all individuals – one size doesn't fit all and what works for one young person might be different for another person! When you involve them, ask them how it's working for them, and be open to ideas for change.

## Example

In Leyton, East London, development work with PPGs has been undertaken by the Patients Association, supported by Waltham Forest Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). A strong relationship has been established with Leyton Sixth Form College, and 12 students, from different ethnic communities, have been linked up with 12 local PPGs. Students and PPGs have worked together to set up social media platforms, produce newsletters and give talks to local sixth form students. The project has highlighted the need for a committed lead person at the college and for support to help practice managers understand the benefits of this type of partnership work. It is also important to ensure that there is mutual understanding of the roles each party plays in the project and for clear objectives to be in place in order to manage expectations.



# A NOTE ABOUT SAFEGUARDING

Putting the right safeguarding arrangements in place when working with children and young people is very important. There are a range of engagement approaches that can be used depending on the type of activity you want to involve young people in or who you want to target specifically. If in doubt – seek advice. Every local authority has a Safeguarding Board and your local Clinical Commissioning Group may also have useful advice.

This guide has been developed with the help of young people and has been written and designed by the NHS Youth Forum.

For further information about the NHS Youth Forum, please contact the Patient Participation Team on [0113 825 0861](tel:01138250861) or [england.nhs.participation@nhs.net](mailto:england.nhs.participation@nhs.net)



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