

# Balham Park Surgery Liaison Group News Letter

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## Wandsworth Council Wades into Extended Hours Debate

Wandsworth Council has strongly criticised the Primary Care Trust's arguments in the extended hours consultation. The statement came in a Council press release on 10 March. Councillor James Cousins, Chair of Wandsworth Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee said: "If this scheme is axed then some people may end up waiting a lot longer before they get to see their doctor while others may put it off altogether. This could have very serious consequences for their health."

You can visit the Council's website [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/healthconsultation](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/healthconsultation) and make your comments. Or write to Extended Hours Consultation, Room 150, Wandsworth Town Hall, London SW18 2PU.

Here is the Council's statement in full:

### Threat to extended opening hours for GPs

Health service proposals to abolish a scheme that allows patients to see their GP out of normal surgery hours have been criticised by Wandsworth Council's spokesman on the NHS. The Wandsworth Primary Care Trust (PCT) is consulting on plans to end an extended hours scheme that is currently operating at six GP surgeries in Balham and Tooting.

Family doctors in the area have been receiving extra money for providing patient appointments in the early morning, late evening or at weekends. The scheme was set up in October 2001 to offer better healthcare for people who find it difficult to visit their GP during normal working hours. But last month, PCT bosses unveiled plans to end the scheme. They say it is too expensive and benefits only limited numbers of people, rendering it inequitable. Their consultation period ends on May 14. The

council's health spokesman Cllr James Cousins is now urging residents to take part in the PCT's consultation and forward their views to the town hall. The council's health scrutiny committee has the power to refer the plans to the Secretary of State, who would then have to make the final decision. However, Cllr Cousins has warned that the PCT's consultation document is riddled with weaknesses. He said: "The PCT claims that the scheme is extremely expensive, but if you look elsewhere in the document you find that last year 15,000 extra appointments were offered at a cost of just £5.86 each.

"The PCT also says that it would cost £1.5 million to extend the scheme to the whole borough, but our analysis has revealed that the true cost would be closer to £200,000.

"And their document also argues that having different provision in different practices is against Government policy on health equality. But the Government says that choice is at the heart of its health policy. How can you have choice if you expect all practices to be exactly the same- "

"The problem with the PCT's proposals is that many people are unable to see their family doctor during normal surgery times for a variety of reasons. They may be unable to take the time off work, or they may find that there are no appointments available during the day for some time.

"An out of hours service gives them the chance to seek medical advice much more quickly, and if they have a serious illness or complaint it can be detected and treated much sooner.

"If this scheme is axed then some people may end up waiting a lot longer before they get to see their doctor while others may put it off altogether. This could have very serious consequences for their health."

The PCT's consultation document offers two alternatives to continuing the scheme:

- use the money to support the Extended Primary Care Access Pilot (ECAP), currently offered at the

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Tooting Walk-in Centre at St George's Hospital and develop a similar scheme at Queen Mary's in Roehampton.

- divide the money used for the scheme between all GP practices in Wandsworth.

Cllr Cousins says he is not convinced by either of these alternatives.

"The consultation document concedes that the pilot scheme at the Tooting Walk-in Centre receives 'negligible' use, presumably because most patients would rather see their own family doctor. It seems a bit strange to propose putting more money into a service, which is clearly not what patients want.

"And if the money were divided equally between all GP practices it would be spread so thinly that patients wouldn't enjoy any real benefits. Practices would each receive an average of just £1,925, which would pay for only 45 minutes of extra consultation time each week."

He added: "It is important for local people to have their say on these plans. If people don't make their voices heard it will probably sound the death knell for a popular, convenient and effective local medical service."

## Extended Hours Consultation - Update

Two important developments to note:

BPSLG is recommending Option 1:  
Maintain current arrangements for clinics  
provided outside of core hours".

1 – The PCT has agreed to come on Wednesday 11 May from 7-8 pm. to speak to an open meeting at the surgery. This is your chance to tell them what you think! This meeting has been arranged because the PCT refused to come on 13 April, saying they believed that the election period precluded them participating in meeting that might be contentious. This is not an excuse which BPSLG accepts!

2 - The consultation period has been extended into June. The early and late appointments remain funded until then. There is still plenty of time for surgery patients to have their say on this key consultation.

Copies of the document are available from the surgery reception, or it can be downloaded from the PCT's website [www.wandsworth-pct.nhs.uk](http://www.wandsworth-pct.nhs.uk)

BPSLG is recommending Option 1 "Maintain current arrangements for clinics provided outside of core hours". That means you want the existing early and late surgeries with bookable appointments at Balham Park Surgery and other surgeries to remain as they are. The issues are discussed in the December issue of BPSLG's newsletter.

No stamp is required. Simply put the completed reply slip in an envelope and write FREEPOST NAT 7848 after Wandsworth Primary Care Trust Headquarters and then the rest of the address.

## Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network Award to BPSLG

The Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network ([www.wcen.org.uk](http://www.wcen.org.uk)) awarded BPSLG £2000 at the end of 2004 as funding for the next year. This award came from the Network's "Community Chest" Fund of £85,000 which was available to community groups in Battersea, Roehampton and Tooting and Balham to impact in areas of better health, improved housing, crime reduction and educational achievement.

BPSLG were awarded the sum on a one off basis and it is to go towards the publication of at least 3 newsletters, 2 open health seminars and monthly meetings. The award is seen by WCEN as an investment in good practice and BPSLG is expected to support other groups wishing to set up a similar project. To this end, the BPSLG committee has decided to draw up a reference document to assist any groups that approach us on this issue. We also always welcome visitors from other practices to our meetings. Needless to say we are immensely grateful to WCEN for this award.



## Surgery News Insert

### **New Reception Staff**

Welcome to Janine Simmons, Simone Hedenskog, Lucy Norman and Bonnie Penston. They all started this year. We have now completed our recruitment drive for this disciplinary group and look forward to consolidating skills within the team.

### **New Practice Nurses**

Welcome to Sally Arden and Kate Crowley who joined us in January and April 2005.

### **Medical Secretary**

Christine Buxton has replaced Claudie Sellers who was covering Jacquie Gilzene on maternity leave.

## New Projects

### **Reception**

Further to the national patient survey that we undertook last year, we have been implementing some positive changes based on your responses.

We need further clarification on some of the feedback relating to reception and have produced a questionnaire in order to get a little more information from you, so that we can be clear about the issues. The questionnaire is available in the waiting room, or you may be handed it at the front desk. We would be really grateful if you could take some time to complete one.

### **Same or Similar Names**

As part of our quality control procedures, we are currently reviewing the notes of all patients with same or similar names. This is to ensure that we have accurate information and highlighted messages in our clinical computer system to alert us when two patients or more have comparable details.

## Updating Your Records

We would like to ensure that we have all relevant contact information. This includes your mobile telephone numbers, next of kin in case of emergency and e-mail address.

If you think our records need adding to or revising please speak to reception or hand in the form "Updating Your Patient Records" from the waiting room.

## Patient Services Administrators

Our three Patient Service Administrators are available Monday to Friday 9.00 am – 5.00 pm. Their role is to provide a one stop service for patients who have queries relating to their appointments or follow-ups. The types of things they can help you with include, following up referrals, hospital appointments or test results. Liaising with a GP on your behalf to gather or confirm information. Booking transport for a first hospital appointment if you are eligible. Confirmation of test results. Issue of replacement Hearing Aid batteries from St Georges Healthcare. Matters relating to non-NHS services for example, private medical claims, certain examinations and insurance reports.

They can be contacted directly on any of the following numbers. If they are engaged you can leave a message and they will return your call as soon as they receive it.

**Anita Asiama**

**020 8772 3322**

**Zillah Blakeney-Edwards 020 8772 3330**

**Alex Burnett**

**020 8772 3333**

## Telephone Consultations

We have been trialling an option for patients to book telephone consultations with the GP of their choice as an additional service each morning. GP's may also use these slots to book telephone follow-up appointments. After running the project for six weeks the doctors and receptionists will meet to review its success. From there we will evaluate and if appropriate draw up some guidelines for patients who may wish to use this service. If you have any thoughts or comments about this service, please complete a Suggestions, Compliments Complaints Form for the attention of Natalie Goldsmid-Whyte our Primary Care Manager.

## Appointments and Messages via the Website

The popular new service called Emis Access, allows patients to view, book or cancel their appointments online and patients will find it very useful for those times when the practice is closed or the phone lines are busy. If you have a question for your GP, you can also send a message to them using Internet Messaging.

If you would like to utilise Emis Access, please register at the surgery. To ensure the security and confidentiality of patient information, photo identification (passport, drivers licence, national id or employee id) is required to register. Ask a receptionist or GP for details.

Once you have registered at the surgery, you will be able to logon and manage your appointments and send messages. To logon, you can access our website at [www.balhamparksurgery.co.uk](http://www.balhamparksurgery.co.uk) and follow the link to appointments and click on EmisAccess to enable your account.

## Electronic Prescription Management Service (ePMS)

We are now able to send your prescriptions to a home delivery pharmacy called Pharmacy2U. For repeat prescriptions, you will no longer need to request or collect them from the surgery and then take them to the pharmacy. One telephone call to Pharmacy2U, an email ([prescriptions@pharmacy2u.co.uk](mailto:prescriptions@pharmacy2u.co.uk)) or a visit to their website ([www.pharmacy2u.co.uk/epms](http://www.pharmacy2u.co.uk/epms)) is all it takes. Pharmacy2U can contact you to remind you when you need your repeat prescription and order it for you. They also provide free delivery of your medication to your choice of address by Recorded Delivery (e.g. home or work).

### How Does it Work

We will send your prescription information to Pharmacy2U electronically, who will then dispense and deliver the medicines to you at the address of your choice. The medicines are delivered free using the Royal Mail's Recorded Delivery Service and must be signed for on receipt. If you pay for your prescriptions, you can pay by debit or credit card. If you claim exemption from payment of NHS prescriptions, you need to send proof of this exemption to Pharmacy2U. You can talk to a pharmacist at any time by calling 0870 787 6210.

Your medicines will normally be delivered to you on the next working day after the prescription is approved by the surgery. To allow us time to approve your prescription, we suggest that you order your repeat prescription 4 to 5 days before you run out of your medication.

### How do you Register for this Service?

If you would like to use the Pharmacy2U Electronic Prescription Management Service, simply follow the steps below and your first prescription will be delivered to you shortly.

- register online at [www.pharmacy2u.co.uk/epms](http://www.pharmacy2u.co.uk/epms)
- phone Pharmacy2U on 0870 787 6210
- once your GP has been told that you have registered for the service, you will receive a letter or email confirmation
- the next time your prescription is due, please call Pharmacy2U or use their website to order your first prescription

## Surgery Receives Quality Practice Award from the Royal College of General Practitioners

Congratulations to Natalie Goldsmid-Whyte, our Practice Manager and all the staff at the surgery for their great team effort. The Award is highly prized by surgeries as it covers every aspect of the surgeries operations and applies to all staff. Everyone has to be performing at to a very high standard in all aspects of the services and facilities that are provided by the surgery. This is the second time that the Award has been given to Balham Park Surgery and that makes our Surgery "tops" as this has never happened before! The letter about the Award Visit to Balham Park Surgery by four specialist Assessors is written in glowing terms throughout with only minor suggestions about action which might be taken in the future. Here are the opening sentences of each section just to show how successful our staff have been:

**Introduction** "Firstly, congratulations on regaining the RCGP Quality Practice Award. You should be justly proud of this achievement. Everyone from Simone, the newest member of staff in reception, to Patrick and Natalie should be delighted...."

**Premises** "You are obviously pleased with the new premises and rightly so. They have allowed you to expand and provide the services you wished to. They are light, airy and a pleasure to be in. The patients thought they were excellent and at no point on the day did the waiting room seem crowded...."

**Notes and computer** "You clearly use your computer system to its maximum potential. The records were all in order and passed the criteria easily. The practice intranet is a well-used and an excellent resource...."

**Practice Management** "You are clearly fortunate to have such a brilliant and hard working manager in Natalie. She makes sure that it all happens and does so without appearing to do so. She was described as being everywhere all of the time...."

**Practice Nurses** "You are fortunate to have such a skilled and pleasant team of nurses. You are obviously in the process of developing their role in the practice and hope to appoint a nurse practitioner soon...."

**Attached Staff** "The District Nurses and Health Visitors who work for the surgery were positively effusive in their praise for the practice. It would seem they had been a little reluctant to move into the new premises, but were delighted they had done so...."

**The Doctors** "We were disappointed not to meet Patrick who you describe as the visionary behind the practice. However other partners obviously share his vision of providing the very best up to date Primary Care...."

**The Patients** "Every patient we spoke to loved the practice. No one could think of any way to improve the practice. This is obviously a glowing tribute to yourselves and shows that it is possible to provide good quality care in Wandsworth...."

**Conclusions** "Well done you thoroughly deserve this award. Balham Park Surgery shines as an example of how it should be done. This is clearly down to the vision of those at the top but is shared by the whole organisation...."

Copies of the full letter are available on request.

The BPSLG are arranging for the Award's commemorative plaque to be presented to Natalie and the staff team at the Group's Annual Meeting on 13 July. We are seeking a suitably prestigious presenter and the local press will be invited to attend.

## Yoga Classes Carry on at Surgery

Readers will remember that BPSLG was able to fund a yoga referral class at the surgery in 2003-04 using prize money from the Royal College of General Practitioners Patient Participation Award. These classes were very popular and though BPSLG no longer funds them, they have carried on with participants paying a small weekly charge. Nell Lindsell the specialist yoga teacher continues to teach these classes.

Nell wrote to us recently about how things are going at the surgery's regular Tuesday evening yoga class: "We are still going strong with a team of about 12-15 ladies. We have a wonderful time each week, lots of laughter, posture work and chat. The improvements are really noticeable and I look forward to the class very much. I really value the opportunity you have given me in teaching this age group and learning so much from them."

Anyone interested in exercise classes, not only yoga, available through the surgery should contact any of the nurses at the practice in the first instance.

## Three More Patient Participation Groups

For a long time it looked like BPSLG and the Brocklebank Group Practice Patients Forum were the only two patient participation groups in Wandsworth PCT – not a very good record for Inner London's largest borough. So it's good news to learn that at least three more groups have recently formed. We don't have many details of their activities yet, but we have been visited by representatives of two of the three new groups and we have extended an invitation to members of the third one – in Putney – to visit us soon.

The new patients groups are based at these GP practices – and they couldn't be more different from each other. That's an important fact to appreciate because patient groups can work in any practice, large or small.

Thurleigh Road Practice (SW12) – a five partner practice with over 8,000 patients in a new, purpose-built surgery.

Mitcham Road Practice (SW17) – a single-handed practice (Dr Sultan) in Tooting

Putney Primary Care Centre (SW15) – three existing GP practices are coming together to use a new building to be constructed on the site of the redundant Putney Hospital in Lower Richmond Road

## Thank you to the surgery from Kevin

BPSLG member Kevin Shinkwin has now moved to Battersea. He has agreed that his "thank you" letter to Natalie Goldsmid-Whyte at the surgery can be quoted in the newsletter. Here's what he had to say...

"Although the staff at my new surgery in Battersea seem very nice, I think that I have been very spoilt by Balham Park Surgery! You have all been wonderful, and I would be very grateful if you could relay to Drs Bower, Morgan, Patel, Swanne, Isherwood and Smail how much I have appreciated their care over the years. Most of all, Natalie, a sincere 'thank you' to you for the dedication and immense professionalism you instil in all the staff. I remember when you asked BPSLG to help conduct the telephone survey [of reception response times] and I can honestly say that I always find the staff on reception unfailingly helpful. This makes a huge difference when you are not feeling at your best – and contrasts sharply with many of the practices I rang yesterday (about registering), some of which had neither anyone to answer the phone nor even an answer phone response!"

We wish Kevin well as a new resident of Battersea and thank him for his very thoughtful and generous donation, which we will use for the benefit of the surgery's patients.

## Newsletter Seeks Editor

BPSLG's newsletter needs a volunteer editor for its three issues per year. If you have experience of editing copying and can work electronically, we'd like to hear from you. This isn't time consuming, but we do need someone to be responsible for it on a regular basis. Bridie Tobin can give more details of what is involved. Email her at [TOBINBCT@aol.com](mailto:TOBINBCT@aol.com)

## Future BPSLG Meeting Dates

The Group have fixed the following meetings for the rest of 2005. All meetings are Wednesday evenings 7.00-9.00 pm, except where noted, and take place in the Education Room on the first floor at Balham Park Surgery. Refreshments are available.

11 May 2005	- Group Meeting with PCT speaker and finalising BPSLG response to Extended Hours consultation
16 Jun 2005	- Education Seminar on "Prevention of Heart Disease" Dr. Bower to speak followed by discussion
13 Jul 2005 (Thursday)	- Annual Meeting & presentation of the Quality Practitioners Award from the Royal College of General Practitioners to the Primary Healthcare Team
14 Sep 2005	- Group Meeting
12 Oct 2005	- Education Seminar on Stress Management by Dr Shehla Baig followed by discussion.
16 Nov 2005	- Group meeting including editorial deadline for Autumn Newsletter
14 Dec 2005	- Group Meeting