

## **A Message to Patients of Fireclay Health from the Patient Participation Group (PPG)**

Hello, I'm writing on behalf of the PPG about how we can all get the best out of our surgery for both ourselves and our families. I'd like to think too about how we all need to adapt to the changing ways our practice staff work and how they deliver services.

Just like all GP surgeries Fireclay staff face increasing challenges:-

- People are living longer with many long term and complex conditions
- Patients may also have to deal with social issues that affect their health like poverty and isolation
- NHS services are expected to offer more healthcare to more patients with fewer resources and not enough staff

In future GP practices will be 'a hub' where many professionals and specialists are based. The days have gone where you would automatically think only of 'seeing the GP.' Receptionists are trained to guide you to the best person to help you and you can talk to them privately if you need to. Fireclay continues to take on a variety of professionals and we at the PPG feel we are very lucky to be at the Fireclay practice. We know we too have to adapt to the changes that are happening and we are confident that we will get better services as a result but these might be delivered in a different way from what we're used to.

It's also good to remember that our relationship with the practice is a partnership; it's their job to do things WITH patients not TO them. We have to accept some responsibility for our own health & self-care. Research shows that more patients are demanding instant answers and solutions. This happens because we now live in a society of 'instant answers' whether it's online deliveries or instant information from the internet. Unfortunately, public services cannot work like that; firstly, there aren't enough of them and secondly it isn't always in your interests to seek advice when your symptoms haven't fully developed so usually waiting some time before seeking advice may be crucial.

We think it's important that we keep in mind that it helps both us and the NHS if we can look after ourselves in the first instance. Some of the following might sound obvious but they can go a long way to helping keep all of us as fit and well as possible.

- Having a good diet and watching our weight
- Taking exercise and getting fresh air
- Being careful with alcohol, drugs and cigarettes
- Having a good social network

So, if you have a health worry is there anything you can do before making a GP appointment?? You could...

- Use your practice's self-help pages
- Talk to your local pharmacist. These are well trained and experienced professionals who may be able to give you immediate remedies or refer you to the best placed professional.
- Look up your symptoms on the internet – but do use this carefully. Only use NHS websites but some symptom checkers can be very useful to put your mind at rest and alert you to things to look for. They may tell you to wait and see!

*The Chair of the Patient Participation Group (PPG)*