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Foreword

This report is published at the most challenging of times, both for the NHS and society as a whole, due to the devastating impact of COVID 19. It is therefore refreshing to be able to reflect upon the positive achievements which have been made by the Patient and Carer Network over the last year.

We work as an integral part of the Royal College of Physicians and our shared goal is the provision of patient-centred care. A wide range of important initiatives have been successfully implemented, and the collective and individual contributions made by the network membership, bear testimony to the progress made towards that goal. We wish to thank each of our members for their efforts and for their continued commitment.

We must also acknowledge that the healthcare landscape is changing rapidly. That places an important duty upon us to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged are given first priority. Change also provides opportunity for innovation and improvement. Working in harmony with the Royal College of Physicians we shall seek to embed new ways of working which offer benefits to patients and carers. We shall strive to enhance the richness and diversity of our membership, and we shall look to strengthen our partnership working. All of this will be underpinned by a commitment to evaluate our progress towards the ultimate goal of care which is designed and developed within the concept of co-production.

Eddie Kinsella
Chair of the Patient and Carer Network

Dr Helen Gentles
Member of the Patient and Carer Network liaison group and patient involvement officer
Introduction

The Patient and Carer Network (PCN) work with the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) to support physicians and healthcare professionals throughout their career to improve the care of patients and the health of the population.

The PCN do this by:

> providing a patient, carer and/or public perspective to support the work and strategy of the RCP
> identifying and bringing the views, interests and concerns of patients and carers to the RCP with a view to informing and influencing RCP activity, policy and strategy
> supporting the RCP to find solutions and strategies to improve the care of patients and the health of the population
> sharing the responsibility of embedding the RCP values – ‘taking care, learning and being collaborative’.

The PCN’s approach for 2019/2020 was:

> **Meaningful**: Patients and carers participating meaningfully in RCP work to support and influence real improvements in health and healthcare for all.
> **Collaborative**: Building understanding across the RCP and externally that working with patients and carers leads to better outcomes.
> **Accessible**: Being inclusive and communicating information clearly, openly and in accessible formats for all.
> **Responsive**: Patients and carers, RCP colleagues and stakeholders sharing successful work in public and patient involvement across the RCP and beyond.

This report shares the range of activities and work undertaken by the PCN between July 2019 and July 2020 and how the PCN has been working to meet its defined operational activities and strategic aims for the year.

‘Person-centred care is at the heart of every physician’s practice.’
Recruit new PCN members, particularly patients and carers from underrepresented groups and communities, and continue to build a representative and engaged PCN.

- In 2019, the PCN recruited 13 new members – 10 to the forum and 3 to the community.
- As part of the RCP’s independent equality diversity and inclusion (ED&I) review, led by Ben Summerskill, the PCN were asked to complete a short three-question survey on gender, age and ethnic/cultural origin. Twenty-eight members of the PCN completed this survey and the results can be found here: PCN ED&I survey results.
- There remains significant work to do in developing a successful engagement and involvement model within the PCN and RCP to hear from patients, carers and communities who are currently underrepresented.

PCN annual report – recruitment engagement activity and outcomes 2019–20
Support recruitment of new PCN chair

> Eddie Kinsella was recruited as PCN chair in March 2020 – PCN members were involved throughout the recruitment process. Eddie was interviewed for the role by members of the PCN and RCP colleagues. ‘My starting point with the PCN is empowerment. I want to build upon the excellent work which has already been undertaken by the network, but I also want to make sure that we are at the forefront of the changes which are taking place so that they are a force for good for all, and to ensure that those most vulnerable or disadvantaged are not inadvertently left behind,’ said Eddie.

Induction to the RCP and the PCN for new members joining the forum and community

> An induction session for new members was due to be planned, however, the impact of COVID-19 put face-to-face opportunities for induction on hold.

> New members that joined at the end of 2019 were invited to attend the PCN workshop in February 2020 – this was the last face-to-face session held before national lockdown. This was a good introductory opportunity for new members to meet existing members and get to know a bit more about the work of the PCN and RCP.

> To support new members, the patient involvement adviser and liaison group ran a remote induction session in April 2020 and plans are in place to introduce a peer support scheme that will give new members the opportunity to chat with existing members about their role and work of the RCP.

Embedding PCN terms of reference and supporting change within the PCN liaison group, and the forum and wider network

> The PCN recruited two existing forum members to the liaison group in January 2020 – Frances Blunden and Stephen Pattison.

> Liaison group member Richard Triffitt came to the end of his tenure and stepped down in May 2020. Richard is now a member of the PCN community.

> Liaison group member Alice Joy continues in tenure until May 2021.

> Lynne Quinney (interim chair) stepped down from the PCN liaison group in July 2020. Lynne will join the PCN community but will continue to help coordinate and support the new peer support scheme.

> Patient involvement officer (PIO), Dr Helen Gentles, stepped back from the PIO during March 2020 due to health reasons. Helen re-joined the PCN liaison group for her first (virtual) meeting in August 2020.

> The PCN terms of reference were implemented in May 2019. The documents are currently being reviewed for 2020, particularly considering the impact of COVID-19 on the PCN and RCP’s ways of working.

Implementing mechanisms for feedback and communications to support PCN representatives to feel informed and confident about sharing consistent messages and good practice in public and patient involvement

> Three PCN workshops were held in May and October (2019) and February (2020). Consistent messages were shared but further work is required on the mechanisms for keeping PCN members in touch and informed. There was strong feedback that the PCN want to be more involved in improvement work and driving patient and carer involvement and co-production forward by setting and leading the agenda.

> In March, there was one PCN statement in support of healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

> Three virtual PCN meetings were held in April, May and June 2020. These provided an opportunity to meet the new chair and establish priority areas for PCN work moving forward.

> Weekly updates were sent out by the PIU from 24 March 2020 – prior to that updates were sent out every 2–3 months. Weekly updates have supported the continued engagement and involvement of PCN members during a challenging time. Updates will continue to go out on a regular basis as feedback on content has been positive.
Continuing to develop the means by which PCN input to RCP work is facilitated, not just via membership of committees, but also (where appropriate) focus groups, surveys, workshops, specialist projects and programmes

> 28 involvement opportunities were shared throughout the year via email. These included PCN recruitment to committees, meetings, workshops, training, working groups, consultations, surveys and calls for evidence.

> The PCN is currently represented on 36 separate RCP committees, boards and working groups.

Strengthening communications and raising the profile of the PCN

> The examples and involvement opportunities described so far clearly show the breadth of involvement of the PCN. The PCN has strengthened its profile and communications, which has increased the number of involvement opportunities and areas for future development.

The PCN in Wales

> More than 1,400 RCP members work in Wales, diagnosing and treating thousands of patients every year.

> RCP Wales: campaigns for improvements to healthcare, medical education and public health; works directly with the Welsh government, health boards and other NHS Wales organisations; carries out local hospital visits; and collaborates with other organisations to raise awareness of public health challenges.

> During 2019–20, the PCN in Wales contributed to ‘Breaking down barriers’, the RCP’s collective manifesto ahead of the Senedd 2021 election.

> Working in partnership with RCP trainee doctors, one of the Wales PCN members led a co-production research project on de-prescribing in acute hospitals, as well as providing the patient perspective on hospital visits and in national executive committee meetings.

> There was an increase in PCN membership in Wales; this is something that needs supporting and building on during 2021 and beyond.
To align with the RCP’s priorities for the year, the PCN set itself five strategic aims. In this section of the report, the strategic aims and planned work are outlined, and details on how the PCN has worked to meet these strategic aims are provided.

**PCN strategic aims 2019–20**

**Support the RCP to listen to what patients need from their doctors and the health service, with a particular focus on promoting and supporting person-centred care**

Engage PCN representatives and RCP colleagues, members and fellows through PCN workshops, liaison group meetings, committees, boards, policy planning and projects.

- Three PCN workshops were held over the year, engaging approximately 95 PCN representatives, RCP colleagues, members, fellows and senior officers
- The PCN:
  - were involved in policy work on integration, health inequalities and research as well as RCP quality improvement and digital health work
  - contributed to ward rounds guidance
  - responded to the RCP 2021–24 strategy consultation as individuals and as a whole. The following statement from the PCN response sets out clearly the PCN’s commitment to supporting the RCP in its work over the next 4 years and beyond.
  
  ‘The PCN is keen to continue working collaboratively with RCP officers and staff to pursue clearly defined aims to improve the health of communities and the population. We want to play a full part in supporting physicians to fulfil their potential, and to influence healthcare design and delivery.’

- Eight liaison group meetings were held to:
  - support planning and steering work of the PCN
  - collate feedback to respond to the RCP strategy consultation

- submit a COVID-19 supporting statement.
- 36 RCP committees, boards and working groups were supported by PCN representatives. Eight new committee opportunities were shared.
- The PCN has played a fundamental role in ensuring the patient and carer voice is heard across the RCP. The PCN adds value to discussions by bringing the focus back to person-centred and integrated care.

Example: PCN representatives on the *Future Healthcare Journal* editorial board have played an important part in the board’s understanding of how it can ensure patient involvement is a key element to its development, particularly when considering the articles that are sought and accepted for the journal.

Work with colleagues across the RCP Education department to support, design and co-deliver training for clinicians and healthcare professionals. Deliver patient and public involvement (PPI) workshops. Recruit to the education board.

- The patient involvement adviser delivered a 30-minute workshop session on public and patient involvement to physician associates attending a leadership course. Feedback was positive and needs building on with the PCN and education colleagues.

- PCN work with RCP education colleagues continues to be a work in progress and will be an important focus for 2020–21.
Support the efforts of the RCP, stakeholders and relevant bodies to ensure that health and care services are delivered in an integrated way

Work proactively with the RCP and other organisations to develop policies, processes and enabling tools and information that improve integrated care for all patients. Emphasise the importance of caring for patients in the community and at home, and supporting patients with long-term conditions.

‘The PCN has played a fundamental role in ensuring the patient and carer voice is heard across the RCP. The PCN adds value to discussions by bringing the focus back to person-centred and integrated care.’

- PCN members contributed to discussions on integrated care at the PCN workshop in October 2019. The PCN picked up this work with a focus group in June 2020 to create new website content that is patient- and carer-centred and can be used as a point of reference for physicians, stakeholders and members of the public. The PCN is working on this in partnership with Policy and Campaigns colleagues.

- Virtual PCN meetings have highlighted that work around joining up health and social care and addressing health inequalities should remain as a priority focus. PCN feedback collected was fed in via the chair to the RCP and Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) joint policy statement on rebuilding and resetting outpatients services.

- The PCN, through its ongoing committee work, has continued to highlight the importance of the patient and carer perspective in key policies and documents.

Example: Nutrition Weight & Health committee – PCN representation has been key to ensuring specific patient input goes into statements, consultation documents and competency frameworks.
Work with colleagues in the Communications, Policy and Research (CP&R) directorate. Support and influence 2020 policy and campaigns priorities on workforce, research, integration and health inequalities. Recruit to the CP&R board.

- The PCN were consulted on RCP policy and campaigns priorities for 2020 to ensure they were patient- and carer-centred.
- The new chair of the PCN will step into their role on the CP&R board.
- The PCN responded to policy and campaigns work around health inequalities.
- The PCN focus group on integration will steer messaging on the policy web page.
- The PCN were involved in the interview and appointment of the new RCP lead fellow for social care. Dr Jonathan Steel has been appointed lead fellow on social care, a 3-year role, working with the RCP to develop and support its policy and campaigns work on social care.

Example: Specific detail about PCN commitment to support doctors in training continues to be the message shared via PCN representative on the Inequalities in Health advisory group.

Engage with the clinical director for Digital Health and maintain links with digital health work at the RCP.

- The PCN has made good links with Dr Wajid Hussain (clinical director for Digital Health).

Example: The PCN chair was asked to submit an introductory piece to Future Healthcare Journal on ‘Compassionate care in digital health’. PCN research in a virtual meeting supported pulling information together for the piece. ‘The central theme of the PCN’s approach is that of ensuring “the human touch” between clinicians, patients and carers is not lost along the way to digital healthcare. Compassionate care is fundamental to any healthcare system.’

Strengthen links to quality improvement (QI) and patient safety work. Meet regularly with QI colleagues and continue PCN representation on the Patient Safety Committee.

- PCN work with QI and patient safety colleagues is still developing. Joint conversations have recently recommenced through COVID-19 recovery meetings.
- The PCN has continued representation on the patient safety and medicines safety committees and were involved in the recruitment of a patient safety fellow.

Example: Chief registrar welcome pack information incorporates new support offer from PCN.

The PCN has been involved in the RCP Chief Registrar Programme. The PCN’s involvement in this programme will be key for the PCN to help support and influence future clinical leaders.
Promote committee guidance and recommendations to support a shared understanding across the RCP of how to practically support patient involvement and lay representation on committees, boards and projects.

- Existing committee guidance and recommendations document was shared in order to evaluate and update to include virtual ways of working. Implementations and updates to ensure information on patient and carer involvement through remote meetings was included. There was a good connection with the head and deputy head of RCP governance.

- There is a future plan to deliver a session with PCN members and look in more detail at how committees work, breaking down some of the barriers for new PCN members.

PCN involvement in the RCP annual conference, Medicine 2020, to support RCP members, fellows and colleagues in understanding the importance of patient and carer involvement in improving health and healthcare.

- The Medicine 2020 conference was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PCN were due to be involved in a specific piece of work alongside QI and patient safety colleagues – the ‘Public Living Room’. This would have been an opportunity for PCN members to have relaxed and informal conversations with delegates about patient and carer involvement.

- The PCN also had the opportunity to be involved in a main plenary session on obesity. These opportunities will be picked up again in the future.

Support the development of a sustainable NHS and ensure that patients and carers have access to the information they need

Continue to work with RCP colleagues and external stakeholders on designing and producing accessible patient and carer information. Complete ‘Research for all’ position statement. Build on external links and opportunities to learn from and engage with stakeholders, organisations and community groups outside of the RCP.

- PCN involvement in the design and production of accessible patient and carer information has ensured that material is person-centred and appropriate.

- PCN involvement in the RCP research strategy is in development.

Example: The PCN had input to ward rounds guidance, National Lung Cancer Audit patient information, a THIS Institute survey and a Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency consultation.

Involvement in the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AOMRC) patient seminar.

- Three PCN members attended the academy patient seminar in October 2019 and the patient involvement adviser facilitated a workshop session.

- The PCN also worked with Dr Emma Vaux (former RCP vice president for education and training) on her ‘Patient involvement in quality improvement’ presentation at the seminar.

- The PCN, through the chair, continue to be actively engaged in conversations with the academy

Input to and support development of the new RCP strategy for 2021–24. Continued involvement on RCP Council and medical specialties board.

- The PCN submitted a response to the consultation on the RCP strategy.

- The PCN chair is a member of RCP Council and medical specialties board.
The PCN in 2020–21

The RCP’s 2021–24 strategy and its nine key priorities for the resetting and rebuilding of NHS services will frame the work of the PCN over the next 12 months. To do this, the PCN will ensure it has mechanisms, structures and processes in place that support a proactive approach to patient and carer involvement. Over the next 4 years, the PCN will continue to build upon the excellent partnership work between the RCP and the PCN to ensure that the patient and carer voice is at the heart of all RCP work.

Over the next 12 months the PCN will:

- Adapt to the COVID-19 NHS environment and remote/virtual engagement, participation and coproduction
- Evaluate where the PCN sits on the ladder of involvement across the RCP (NHS England Ladder of Engagement)
- Explore ways to increase the diversity of membership of the PCN and maximise the latent skills and expertise within the network
- Explore greater involvement/influence at NHS provider level
- Support the successful development of the RCP northern base at The Spine, Liverpool
- Raise the PCN and RCP profile through joint communications and marketing
Further info
To find out more about the PCN, visit the RCP website or contact the Patient Involvement Unit:
rcplondon.ac.uk/PCN
PIU@rcplondon.ac.uk