

Closing Statement

Hill Surgery Action Group (HSAG)

Date: 18th February 2025

Dear HSAG members and patients of the Hill Surgery,

Since creating the HSAG in December 2023 we have gone on together to help transform the services provision of the Hill Surgery. Some of the significant milestones have been as follows:

Inviting HSAG members to an open meeting at Blacklands Parish Hall in February 2024 to discuss concerns raised by them about the recently created Hill Surgery.

Partnering with the surgery PPG to discuss its lack of constitution, poor membership and the concerns of HSAG members.

Forming, at the request of the then PPG Committee, a constitution, Terms of Reference, expanded committee and voting rights, all of which represented the views of its committee, members and patients.

We questioned the lack of response to requests to join the PPG via the surgery website. An internal investigation found a non-working link, which was corrected.

Members of HSAG were accepted onto the PPG committee which allowed us to take part in direct discussions with the surgery management. We were finally able to question surgery services on behalf of our members.

This resulted in getting the external, Manchester-based telephone reception service improved to include the call-back facility, and getting that call-back time reduced from many hours to minutes.

Also getting the automated answering service updated to remove the accusing tone in messages towards patients and the information regarding numbers of call received each day reduced to an accurate level.

The HSAG Nextdoor Group has been active from the start, and committee members have given their own time to offer advice, encouragement, and sympathy in equal measure to patient members as needed. We encouraged members that could not get an appointment via the phone to use the NHS App as an on-line alternative, where appropriate.

Creating an HSAG website as an alternative to the Nextdoor HSAG Group, where our latest news, minutes of HSAG meetings and events could be accessed more easily.

HSAG, via the PPG, was asking questions related to the prescription process, sample testing and the complaints process when the surgery criticised the PPG committee and decided to disband the PPG, moving to a monthly newsletter and questionnaire format.

Some committee and PPG members were threatened with de-registration during the process of running the PPG committee in a fair and equitable manner, accused of bullying when challenging due process, effectively gagging the individuals who were simply endeavoring to have a voice at the table. Nevertheless, they continued their efforts and, with the support of the ICB, were given a fair opportunity to discuss members' real and measurable concerns.

As the Practice Manager has previously refused to open a dialog with HSAG, the disbanding of the PPG lost us an important communications channel, which was the intention of the surgery management, of course. Now the monthly newsletter is becoming more of a NHS Sussex broadsheet with some local news included, and the questionnaires have stopped.

Finally the surgery has recently surveyed its registered patients on the proposed closing of Beaconsfield Road Surgery in a heavily weighted or vague set of questions which are bound to provide it with the evidence to do just that. HSAG has written to Helena Dollimore and Sussex ICB pointing out that the closure will affect thousands of local patients that use Beaconsfield Road Surgery before the merger. We will question the surgery about the relevance of its survey questions and advise members of its response, should we receive one.

Despite the proposed closure HSAG feels that it has achieved what it set out to do: improve services to patients of the Hill Surgery. We will be closing the HSAG website in the near future, but the HSAG Nextdoor Group will remain open and active. As the surgery Practice Manager refuses to open any dialog with HSAG, we feel that members and patients can still achieve improvements to services, when needed, by complaining in writing to the Practice Manager, or if necessary, Sussex ICB.

We on the HSAG committee wish the surgery team continued focus on patient care and, equally, patient satisfaction with their NHS services.

And to all our members we wish health and happiness, and good luck for the future.

Best regards,

Nick Andrews (Chairperson)

Maxine Green (Vice Chairperson)

Paul Rodger (PR and Legal)

Karen Purser (Rural Provision)