

THE FRIENDS OF LAKESIDE HEALTH CENTRE



PATIENT PARTICIPATION

The Friends of Lakeside was established in July 1990 with initial concerns about the disrepair of the Lakeside Health Centre. We formulated a constitution to work with patients registered with the Lakeside Medical Practice and Dental Practice, and the medical and dental staff who worked there. The concept was fully supported by Professor Peter Higgins, the then senior partner at the Practice, and Head of General Practice at Guy's Hospital. Founder members were Dr Ginny Todd MBE and Mary Chambers MBE.

The initial committee consisted of 6 patients, a doctor, dentist and the Practice Manager. We set up our bank account and formalised the committee at an Inaugural meeting in July 1990. We affiliated to the charity, National Association of Patient Participation, and followed (some of) their guidelines! The Friends emerged as a campaign group and the first venture was to challenge the Bexley Health Authority, as it was then before Primary Care Trusts came into being, to get the Health Centre up to standard and to fulfil their obligations under the terms of their lease for the building.

The Health Authority felt quite threatened by this group of people called the Friends of Lakeside, but eventually after several meetings agreed to work with us to overcome the many problems we were facing.

THE CAMPAIGN

Our first concern was the leaking flat roof. Water penetrated down walls and onto carpets and patients' chairs in the waiting area and consulting rooms. Strategically placed buckets had been a familiar sight at the Health Centre for many months! Walls were splattered with what could only be described as body fluids and the lift to the doctors' and dentists' surgeries and reception area was also in a state of disrepair.

By the end of 1990 repairs to the roof had been carried out, just in time for Christmas, with other maintenance work ready for re-decoration to begin. All walls, ceilings and doors needed a coat of paint so the Friends contacted Manders Paints who were advertising their new water-based products on television and they agreed to test them out on a community building for us if we could get the work done.

Gallons of white paint were delivered and our poor reception staff had to wear Manders Paint baseball caps while the painting work was in progress!

The lift was then cleaned, and new carpets fitted throughout the Health Centre. It was then ready for fundraising to begin and to look at ways to enable patients

to have a voice in their healthcare. I (Mary) was the manager of a Community Charitable Trust at the time so was able to work with the Friends in that capacity to raise funds. By mid 1991 we had managed to accrue just over £110,000 so our part of the refurbishment work to the Health Centre could begin. With this funding we purchased:

- New upholstered chairs for the waiting areas (some 60 in total). This introduction of royal blue and grey gave a light and airy look to the Centre - often commented by grateful patients that it looked a bit like Heathrow airport!
- New upholstered chairs for the medical and dental receptionists.
- New chairs and decoration to the Seminar Room and we fitted out the Doctors' conference room.
- New desks and chairs for doctors' surgeries.
- 'Please Wait' - 'Please Enter' signs for the doctors' surgeries.
- New Venetian blinds for all the windows.
- New curtains for GP examination and treatment room couches, made by a couple of the Friends volunteers.
- New fridges for vaccines etc.
- Play equipment and Wendy House for the younger patients.

We were successful in getting the Health Authority to install an indoor water fountain so patients had easy access to fresh drinking water. The local football club then donated a number of very large picture frames for the corridor walls.

CARING FOR OUR YOUNGER PATIENTS

PLAYWORKER POST

The Lakeside Health Centre is designed around a central block housing medical and dental reception, the Treatment Rooms, toilets and storage. This meant that children had the opportunity to run round which caused disturbance to sick and/or elderly patients. The Friends employed a full-time Playworker with funding raised from the Trust for London. Heather was able to amuse the children and keep them quiet and occupied and often looked after the child or children while the adult was in with the doctor or dentist. Heather was with us for four years until the funding ran out and could not be replaced.

Toy bags were introduced and filled with appropriate toys, puzzles and books for the various age ranges. Parents/carers could collect a toy bag from reception as they arrived and then return it as they left - amazingly very few toys went missing. Toys were inspected and cleaned on a regular basis and replaced as necessary. Each doctor's surgery was equipped with a toy box and toys to amuse the children.

Colouring competitions were held on a regular basis for the under-elevens with prizes for the best entries. These were organised by the reception team.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE UNDER FIVES

The Friends had gained a reputation by 1993 for good practice in patient participation. We were becoming widely known when the Arthur Anderson Foundation gave grants of £23,000 a year for two years to work with the under-fives, mainly to do with teaching children to swim from an early age, in line with immunisation targets and child development. Classes were organised, in conjunction with the Health Visitors at the local Leisure Centre where there was a learner pool. Christmas parties were held at the local library, and seaside outings were also included for under privileged under-fives and their siblings. (in hindsight not to be recommended!!). Each child received a Christmas present.

AQUA-NATAL CLASSES

Working with Lakeside's midwife the Friends carried out and funded a one-year programme of aqua-natal classes for pregnant mums after their 12th week of pregnancy. We were fortunate that our midwife is also an aqua-natal instructor.

THE FRIENDS INVOLVING LOCAL PEOPLE

With support from local people and businesses the Friends began another fund-raising venture to provide medical equipment which was outside the NHS remit for funding but which was necessary to improve the facilities at Lakeside.

Table sales were introduced on a Monday morning that were very popular but ceased when people moved on and could not be replaced to run them. Patients and staff undertook sponsored walks, for 3 years we had a Marathon runner who had run in many of the International marathons all around the world.

With this funding the Friends set up a loan service for the Practice Nurses of:

- Nebulisers for use by children in their own homes (the incidence of asthma in children was very high at that time) - and
- TENS machines for the relief of chronic pain
- 24 hour blood pressure monitors

Local companies have supported the Friends for many years. Their grants and donations have purchased:-

- An ECG machine which gives results immediately
- Examination Couches
- Operating Lamps
- A scanner printer
- Cryosurgery equipment
- and numerous other items

WORKSHOPS FOR PATIENTS

In conjunction with Annual General Meetings the Friends have invited guest speakers on subjects such as Chiropody and Dental Hygiene etc.

FUN DAYS

For two years in succession the Friends organised Family Fun Days in the grounds of the local school and the open area at Tavy Bridge. This gave an opportunity for patients to have fun and relax together.

The Friends committee manned the stalls and looked after issues such as insurance and health & safety.



At Tavy Bridge in 2001



McDonalds loaned their 'Drinks Bubble' so the kids had plenty to drink and prizes and raffles, and balloons were donated by the local shops.

Community groups such as the Crossway Gymnastics Centre and the Karate Club put on displays. There were bouncy castles, side shows, community stalls and lucky dips.



A hot August day in the grounds of the local primary school in 2002



THE 'PULSE' BEHIND THE PRACTICE

The Friends Annual Report 'The Pulse Behind the Practice' has been included in the Annual Report of the Medical Practice.

PATIENT-FRIENDLY MATERIAL

Since the inception of the Friends of Lakeside we have devoted much time in ensuring posters and other literature are presented in such a way that patients can easily understand them. The area covered by the Lakeside Medical Practice has a large and diverse ethnic and cultural mix.

The Friends' large wall displays have covered many issues of healthcare :-

- Diabetes
 - Osteoporosis
 - Hay Fever
 - Tetanus
 - Illness in children
 - Stopping Smoking
 - Travel Clinic advice
 - Cervical Smears
 - Warts & Verrucas
 - Malaria
 - Influenza Vaccinations
- and the children's picture gallery

With wording supplied by the medical professionals we have produced leaflets and booklets on many of the above and:-

Eczema – a family affair
Solving the Sleep Problem in children
Dementia
Earache in children
Diabetes
Back pain ... and others

GOOD 'PRACTICE'

The Friends of Lakeside produce the quarterly Medical Practice Newsletter Good 'Practice' for information sharing with patients.

THE WEBSITES

www.lakesidemedics.co.uk

The Friends introduced the website to the Practice more than 7 years ago. Associate Computer Services Ltd sponsors the registration and hosting. The website is updated and re-designed by the Friends on a regular basis. Patients are able to book appointments and repeat prescriptions online which helps reduce the amount of calls to reception. The site includes all the services provided by the Medical Practice and online forms for registration etc.

This year the Friends introduced 'The Junior Zone' an interactive website for our younger patients which includes advice on healthy eating and exercise, online games and audio stories.



WELCOME PACK FOR NEW PATIENTS

Part of the Friends support to Lakeside has been producing the Information Booklet for patients wishing to register with the Practice. The booklet is designed by the Friends and sent off to the printers to be produced. The Friends also produce the information booklet onto CD for patients with computer technology. The booklet is also available in large print format for the partially sighted.

THE CONTACT PROJECT

– for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse

This was the brainchild of Dr Todd and one of her patients. Dr Todd was concerned about the high incidence of childhood sexual abuse being reported to her. A sub-committee of the Friends was set up to oversee the work of the Contact Project which included Ginny as Medical Director, a Clinical Psychologist, a GP and 6 patients from the Lakeside Medical Practice. The work of Contact was completely confidential within the group and closely monitored.

One-to-one and group sessions took place in a nearby maisonette allocated for the work which took the users' problems away from a healthcare setting and into the community. Women were able to discuss their problems confidentially (many for the first time in their lives) and benefited greatly from the concept of self-help and mutual support. The workers themselves were survivors of sexual abuse.

Initially the Contact Project was funded by the Lakeside Medical Practice until the Friends of Lakeside gained three year's funding from the Lottery through their programme Health, Disability and Care with the support of Bexley Social Services. We were unable to apply for development funding from the Lottery as the programme that funded Contact was discontinued.

When Contact was forced to close because of lack of funding in March 1994, some 100 women were still using the service. Our request for funding from the King's Fund failed, also a campaign drive with our local MP.

Ginny and her patient now give regular seminars on childhood sexual abuse in women to Greenwich University.

THE CANDY STRIPERS and the BEVAN UNIT

The Bevan Unit is an Intermediate Care Unit (similar to a Cottage Hospital) situated in west Thamesmead. Dr Todd (Ginny) was on the project team to set the Unit up and then served on the management board. I (Mary) was Chair of the Board for a five-year period until Bexley Locality withdrew their funding. The Candy Stripers was an idea that Ginny brought back from Canada, so the Friends of Lakeside set up a pilot scheme of volunteers to work at the Bevan Unit, to read to patients there, paint their nails etc or to generally befriend them. A couple of Lakeside patients busied themselves with pink striped material making the Candy Stripers' 'uniforms'. Unfortunately the project folded due to lack of support from the Bevan Unit staff.

ANGER MANAGEMENT GROUPS

Anger Management Groups have been funded by the Friends and run by two Occupational Therapists dealing with mental health issues. Patients were referred by their GPs and two groups with 12 patients were run over 10 week periods.

BACK TO CAMPAIGNING

In November 2006 a public meeting was called by the Friends of Lakeside to challenge Bexley Care Trust about their plans to prevent GPs referring directly to consultants and having referral letters about us (the patient) sent to the Trust for approval. One hundred or so patients attended the meeting and put their concerns to the representative from BCT.

Dr McCullagh thanks the Patients

"A big thank you to all who attended the Lakeside public meeting last year. This was to raise awareness of Bexley Care Trusts attempt to impose a clinical assessment service on GP referrals which would have meant all referral letters written by your GP would have to have been sent to the Care Trust for approval before going to a Consultant.

At the public meeting, many of you questioned David Sturgeon, a representative from Bexley Care Trust and a large number of you signed a notice refusing the Care Trust access to look at any referrals made on your behalf. The meeting was very well attended and reported on in the local press.

I am now pleased to be able to tell you that the Clinical Assessment Service has been withdrawn, not only at Lakeside, but at every other Practice across Bexley.

I would like to thank you for your support in helping to raise awareness of this issue which shows patient power really does work."

ARE YOU THAT ONE IN A HUNDRED?

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PATIENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE FUTURE DESIGN OF HEALTHCARE AND SERVICES

As you may be aware, the Government are eager to bring more services out of the hospital and into the community. The Friends are keen to look at ways in which we can increase the services available at the Practice and would like to ask patients' opinion on various proposals.

The Friends of Lakeside are taking an active part in this and are looking for 100 volunteers who would be willing to be contacted on a regular basis regarding proposed new services or changes to existing services. This will involve no more than filling in a quick survey or speaking to a member of staff when a change is being considered.

We are looking for people of all ages and backgrounds to participate, to provide a representative view of our entire patient population.

This is the patients' opportunity to work with the Practice to improve their health service. In addition, patients will be asked to think of services they would like to see at Lakeside, or areas in which services can be improved.

NOW A QUIET TIME FOR THE FRIENDS OF LAKESIDE

The Friends are having a quiet time pending the Practice moving into the new Health Centre, hopefully at the end of 2007. Apart from maintaining contact with the Practice and doing the essential work of keeping the website up-to-date and producing any newsletters, posters or literature, the activities of the Friends will lessen. The 'Are You That One in a Hundred?' scheme is well underway and will be ready to be in place by the end of the year.

The purpose of this report is to collate and describe some (but not all) of the achievements over the past 16 years.

It is important to remember that the Friends of Lakeside, or any other patient participation group, is not all about raising funds but more to do with involving patients in their own healthcare and hearing from the patients themselves what their needs and aspirations are.

The success of the Friends of Lakeside has been the support we have received from the Doctors and other medical staff and the Reception Team at the Practice, and we have been fortunate in this respect.

The Friends of Lakeside will re-group by the end of the year with a new agenda, and see what challenges face us when the new building is up and running.

Dr Ginny Todd MBE and Mary Chambers MBE
2008