

Barnabas Patient Voices

From: Barnabas Patient Voices <keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk>
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Subject: Barnabas Patient Voices Monthly Update, January
Attachments: PPGukNews - 03 January 2026.pdf; PPGukNews - 13 December 2025.pdf; PA_News_Dec.pdf

Email to All **Barnabas Patient Voices** Members ...

Printed copies to members without email.

A copy will also be posted on our Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/barnabas.ppg>, and website, <https://barnabasvoices.org.uk/>.

If you can't read any of the attached documents, or want printed copies of anything mentioned, please contact me and I'll try to send you a copy.

Happy New Year! Welcome to the January update for **Barnabas Patient Voices** members.

In view of the fact that we've just had almost two weeks of holidays, there is not a huge amount of news this month.

Infectious Disease Update

Covid

There's not much very recent data on Covid, but the latest indications are that it is still running at a low level. Having said that, it is a good bet that infection rates will be on the up again when I next check the data! So no, we can't assume Covid has gone away – at least not yet – and we could see a post-holiday spike in infections.

Flu

The situation with flu is somewhat confusing. Until a couple of weeks ago flu infections were going up quite quickly, however the latest data I've seen show that rates have fallen for two weeks running. Hopefully that will continue, but again following the holidays, a second peak is not unlikely. There have been a lot of dire warnings about it being a bad flu year especially as flu kicked off at least a month earlier than normal this year – which seems to be partly down to the new mutation that's circulating. These pessimistic predictions could, of course, still be correct. Only time will tell. For those who are interested, there's a lot of background to this, including:

- Prof. Christina Pagel, [Is it really a super flu year?](#) (11 December)
- The BBC, [Flu in five charts - how this year's winter outbreak is different](#) (11 December)
- The *Guardian*, [Flu patient numbers in English hospitals fall for second straight week](#) (2 January)

The watchword is still take care, and keep your fingers crossed that everything keeps going in the right direction.

Barnabas Patient Voices News

January Open Meeting – Agenda

Our next **Open Meeting** is on **Wednesday 21 January, 13:00, on Zoom.**

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7279594414?pwd=VmYwODdoWGg2eTFvTVjVlZyRmhSQ09>

Please join us if you can!

The agenda will be:

1. Introductions & Apologies
2. Approve Minutes of November Open Meeting
3. Talk on GP use of AI* or Focussed Discussion Topic (subject tbc)**
4. Members' Feedback
5. Practice Updates
6. Group Updates
7. Matters Arising, AOB

* I have asked the Practice if one of the GPs can talk to us about AI. Failing that we will have a focussed discussion topic.

** This is something different which I want to try; if successful we can make it an occasional agenda item.

The intention is that we discuss a specific topic (chosen in advance) with the aim of finding new ideas (beyond the same old gripes). For instance discussion topics could include:

- How can the waiting area be improved
- What innovative things would we like the Practice to do
- What can we do to make group membership more inclusive
- Do we have ideas for making the Open Meetings more useful

I'll try to send out a reminder a week or so before the meeting, and include the discussion topic I've drawn from my top hat.

Meet the Patients

As I said in my December Update, very few members have volunteered to help with our "Meet the Patients" sessions this year. So, sadly, this means that at present we cannot support these sessions and I have not scheduled any dates. However it may be possible to run some Wednesday afternoon sessions starting in the Spring. Nevertheless Noreen and/or I will be dropping into the waiting area every couple of weeks to check over the Book Exchange and the noticeboards, and we'll use this as an opportunity to engage with willing patients for a short time.

Barnabas Practice News

There is no news from the Practice this month.

Local Healthcare News

There is also no local healthcare news this month.

General NHS & Healthcare News

FluSurvey

Did you know you can help track flu in the UK? Because many people follow advice and manage their influenza-like illnesses (ILI) at home, the number of people affected by is often an unclear picture. FluSurvey is a way of clarifying that picture. It's an international collaboration, run in the UK by UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), which tracks flu-like symptoms and other ILI by collecting weekly updates from people at home. To take part you need to do is register once, then each week during flu season tell us how you're feeling (you'll get an email to prompt you!). It generally takes less than a minute – although a bit longer if you report symptoms. FluSurvey is a quick and easy way of helping the NHS track, and research, the levels of flu. You can register at <https://flusurvey.net/et/vacc25>.

Chickenpox (Varicella) Vaccination

From this month GP practices will be offering eligible children a combined vaccine for measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (MMRV) as part of the routine infant vaccination schedule. This replaces the previous MMR vaccination. Details at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-chickenpox-vaccination-offered-for-first-time-to-children>.

Information about the HPV Vaccine

Human papillomavirus, or HPV, is a group of common viruses. HPV lives in the skin and cells lining the inside of our body. This includes the genital area, mouth, and throat. It can lead to cancer of the reproductive organs or mouth/throat in later years. The HPV vaccine is the best protection against an infection with HPV and gives 98% protection against the 9 main types of HPV. The vaccine is given to 12-13 year olds (girls and boys) in school, although if you missed out and are under 25 talk to your GP. Here's a lot more information on HPV and the vaccine at <https://hpvinform.com/>.

Thoughts on Screening

We've heard a fuss recently about the government's decision not to run a screening programme for prostate cancer. When to run screening, and when not to, is always a difficult decision and involves weighing things like the expected number of lives saved against the number of invasive further tests which turn out to be unnecessary. Kit Yates, Professor of Mathematical Biology and Public Engagement at University of Bath, shares some thoughts on screening from a scientific perspective at <https://kityates.substack.com/p/to-screen-or-not-to-screen>.

NHS App's family access feature "as simple as switching Netflix profiles"

A new family feature is being piloted in the NHS App, aimed at making it easier for parents and carers to manage their loved ones' health. The service will mean people can apply online to add another profile to their NHS App instead of having to do it in person at their GP practice. More information at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2025/09/nhs-apps-family-access-feature-as-simple-as-switching-netflix-profiles/>.

Newsletters

A round-up of potentially interesting newsletters received since the last update .

- **Patients Association News** for 05/12, 12/12, 19/12 – attached, but no printed copies
- **PPGukNews** for 13/12, 03/01 – attached

Please share healthcare news! (But not anything about your personal care.) Please be brief – just a link to a news item is fine. Email to me at keith@barnabasvoices.org.uk, or leave me a note with reception at the medical centre.

That's it for this month. Take care, keep warm, and let's make 2026 better than its predecessor.

Keith



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