

South West research participant fully engaged in community health

Kate Atkinson has a valuable perspective of clinical research taking part in an asthma study and as the chair of a Patient Participation Group at a Cornwall GP practice.

In her working life Kate, whose professional background is in social work, has for the past eight years been a Service User Consultant supporting Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust with improvements to health services and patient experience.

Kate passionately believes that we have a social responsibility to contribute and actively take part in our communities. This is what motivated her to join the Patient Participation Group (PPG) at her research active GP practice Penntorr in Torpoint, Cornwall.

Kate said: "I don't think anyone can be dissatisfied with a service or experience they have if they do not give their feedback or help the service provider identify and make improvements. There are so many different ways to get involved and it doesn't have to be complicated or time consuming. A recent example of involvement was patients and local people being consulted on the bus service timetable to ensure access to GP services when a small practice branch was relocated. If you want to influence change which affects you then you need to engage."

Kate decided to participate in a clinical research study because she felt it would add integrity to her role as a PPG Chair when she is encouraging greater participation and support to health care and services. She is currently taking part in an asthma study which is looking at effective treatment doses of inhaled steroids to prevent periods of poor asthma control called exacerbations.

Commenting on the commitment made to this clinical research study Kate added: "It only involves filling out short questionnaires, having the peak flow of my lung capacity measured at the clinic at six and 12 months and discussing how I am managing my condition and any changes. I stay on my own regular medication throughout this study so there is little by way of inconvenience to how I am going about my daily life.

"It feels good knowing that I am doing something small which might have a big positive impact for other asthma patients in the future. I firmly believe better understanding can transform patient care and experience."

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