

## **DNA Policy**

### **Introduction**

More than 15 million general practice appointments are being wasted each year because patients do not turn up and fail to inform surgeries that they will not be attending.

There are around 307 million sessions scheduled with GPs, nurses, therapists, and other practice staff every year and 5% – one in twenty – are missed without enough notice to invite other patients. That works out as around 15.4 million missed slots.

Of these, around 7.2million are with busy family doctors, which adds up to more than 1.2 million GP hours wasted each year – the equivalent of over 600 GPs working full time for a year.

Each appointment costs an average of £30, putting the total cost to the NHS at more than £216million pounds on top of the disruption for staff and fellow patients that would pay for:

- The annual salary of 2,325 full time GPs
- 224,640 cataract operations
- 58,320 hip replacement operations
- 216,000 drug treatment courses for Alzheimer's
- The annual salary of 8,424 full time community nurses

(Source : <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2019/01/missed-gp-appointments-costing-nhs-millions/>)

Approximately 70 appointments per month are classified as 'Did Not Attend' (DNA) - i.e. the patient did not turn up for the appointment and did not contact the surgery in advance to cancel/change appointment. The effects of these are:

- An increase in the waiting time for appointments
- Frustration for both staff and patients
- A waste of resources
- A potential risk to the health of the patient

Also see Removal of Patient from List <sup>[\*]</sup> for up to date procedural guidelines.

### **General Policy**

It is important that any DNA policy is agreed as a practice and patients are made aware of the policy and the reason for implementing. **Whilst it is important to be consistent, there will be exceptions on an individual case-by-case basis.**

The policy can be conveyed by notices in the waiting room, as well as a copy of the system on the surgery website. It should also be discussed by the patient participation group (PPG), as their support is important in supporting the process.

If a patient fails to attend a pre-booked appointment the patient will be sent an SMS / text message to inform them of the missed appointment, advising them that this has been recorded on their record and advising them to review the surgery's DNA policy on our website.

*We note that you recently missed an appt at Wood Lane Medical Centre and wanted to remind you of the importance of cancelling appointments if you are unable to attend. To help avoid missed appointments, please keep a record of your appt details. Please visit our website to review our DNA (Did Not Attend) Policy.*

If a patient fails to attend a pre-booked appointment on a further occasion(s) in the space of 12 months, an informal warning letter will be sent to the patient, advising them that a further occurrence could risk removal from the practice.

If the patient fails to attend a third pre-booked appointment within the space of 12 months, a formal warning letter will be issued. Following this formal warning letter, any further missed appointments within the 12 month period will be discussed at a practice meeting and a majority agreement will be reached as to whether the patient will be removed from the practice list.

Warning letters are valid for a period of 12 months. Removal based on warnings greater than 12 months old will be invalid – in this case a further formal warning and period of grace will be required.

## **Screening Appointments**

Where a patient with a chronic condition, or who is otherwise deemed to be "at risk", fails to attend a screening or a recall appointment there may be an implied duty on the practice to follow-up the reason for non-attendance to ensure that the patient's health is not at risk. These patients are contacted by phone or text message with a satisfactory outcome judged by the clinician.

The responsible clinician (usually the doctor or the nurse holding the clinic) will be responsible for initiating action to contact the patient by telephone to determine the reason for the failure to attend and, where possible, re-arrange the appointment.

The clinician will have overall responsibility for the individual patient follow-up and attendance, although the administration aspects may be delegated.

The DNA must be coded onto the clinical system at each non-attendance.

The Practice Manager will be responsible for the issue of a monthly DNA clinical system report by clinician for clinician review.

**>>> Continues >>>**

**For an example of a final removal letter please see Removal of Patient from List [\*]**

**First letter (INFORMAL warning)**

Dear

I have noticed from our records that you failed to attend two separate appointments at the surgery within the space of the last 12 months.

This may have been an oversight on your part, but I need to bring to your attention that the practice has a policy regarding missed appointments and I enclose an explanation leaflet for you to explain the procedure.

If you have specific problems that you wish to discuss that are preventing you from informing us when you cannot attend for an appointment, then please ring me on the above telephone number and I will try and help where I can.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Practice Manager

**Second letter (FORMAL WARNING)**

Dear

Further to my previous letters dated \_\_\_\_\_ I have been made aware that you failed to attend a further appointment on \_\_\_\_\_.

As explained in the leaflet I sent you and the notice on display in the practice reception area, the practice takes repeated missed appointments very seriously. As a result, this letter represents a formal warning that should a further appointment be missed you will be removed from the practice list without further notice.

If you would like to discuss the circumstances surrounding your appointments, please contact our Reception Manager/Practice Manager.

Yours sincerely,

Senior Partner  
On behalf of the Partnership

**FIRST LETTER (Following DNA contact)**

Dear,

Following our recent telephone conversation, I confirm that a new appointment has been arranged for you as follows:

Date:

Time:

With:

In order to make sure that you remain in the best health, it is essential that you attend for your health/screening check. If you are unable to do so, and to prevent valuable appointment time going unused, you must arrange to telephone reception to cancel this in advance.



As advised, we will be telephoning you on [*insert date*] to confirm that you will attend.

Yours sincerely,

**PRACTICE MANAGER**

**APPENDIX 1 : NOTICE FOR RECEPTION AREA**

The attached file is an A4 poster that can be used in your reception area (a downloadable PDF and a PNG image file);

PDF (A4 document)	PNG (Image File)
<div> DID NOT ATTEND POSTER.pdf</div>	<div> DID NOT ATTEND POSTER.png</div>