

NHS Intensive Support Team

Information Sheet (I-26)

MANAGING DID NOT ATTENDS (DNA'S) AND CANCELLATIONS

Overview

DNAs and cancellations are a very costly waste of resource within the NHS and so it is important for providers to have a focused plan of action to proactively manage them.

Cancellations (by patient)

Patients have the right to cancel their appointment ahead of the appointment time, if they are unable to attend. It is considered good practice to agree a date for another appointment at the time of the cancellation where possible. Where possible the appointments offered should be provided before their timed pathway milestone to reduce likelihood of potential breach, and escalated to the responsible manager if this is not possible. It is important to confirm the patient's availability for a future appointment, along with a time they may be available to agree an appointment time, enabling appointments to be negotiated with patients when they are available to both discuss and attend.

Subsequent Cancellations (by patient)

Where a patient cancels a subsequent appointment, it will be necessary for the notes to be reviewed by the consultant to decide the most appropriate action to be taken. If the patient fails to attend a second appointment, the consultant or member of the clinical team may consider contacting the patient to discuss their non-attendance at the appointment. Where there is subsequent or continued non-attendance, the consultant should consider whether is appropriate to discharge back to the referrer. This process will need to be set in the Trust Access / Cancer Access Policy.

Cancellations (by hospital)

The cancellation of patients' appointments by the hospital is very poor practice which causes inconvenience to the patient and reduces the efficiency of the service. Incidents of hospital cancellations should be significantly reduced by good adherence to Trust leave notification policies. Cancellations of patients' appointments by the provider, particularly for 2WW pathways, should be a rare occurrence that should only be authorised where no other options to cover the clinic are available or appropriate.

Providers should adhere to the following principles when developing local clinic/appointment cancellation policies:

- implementing policies encouraging clinicians to book annual leave requests for the year ahead;
- a minimum cancellation timescale in place for requests to cancel clinics e.g., minimum six weeks;
- limiting "acceptable" clinic cancellation reasons to sickness, immediate family emergency, etc.; and
- implementing "fire-break" clinics at six to eight week intervals to manage unforeseen circumstances.

Monitoring DNA's and Cancellations

As a very minimum, organisations should be monitoring data around DNAs such as DNA rates by specialty per month and making a local decision on what is an acceptable DNA rate for the organisation or specialty to meet.

Good practice for reducing DNA's

Providers may like to consider the following initiatives to help reduce DNA's:

- Fully book appointments, so patients have an opportunity to agree a suitable appointment which is convenient to them;
- Providing patients with a leaflet confirming the Trust DNA policy with the booking letter;
- Ask the patient to write down the appointment details which helps commit to memory;
- Advise patients of the implications if they do not attend their appointment, and reconfirm again in the appointment letter;
- Trust should ensure there are clear policies and procedures in place to deal with DNA's and patient cancellations, which reflect the spirit of access guidance, along with the organisations access policy.

The NHS Improving Quality (NHS IQ) website provides useful tools for managing DNA's.



[NHS IQ – REDUCING DNA'S](#)

Organisations may also like to benchmark DNA performance against other organisations:



[NHS COMPARATORS](#)

The NHS IMAS IST publication *Delivering Cancer Wait Times – A Guide for Managing Effective Cancer Care*, provides more detailed information regarding pathway adjustments for DNA's on cancer pathways:



[NHS IMAS IST – DELIVERING CANCER WAIT TIMES – A GUIDE FOR MANAGING EFFECTIVE CANCER CARE](#)