

Agenda item 12

Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 26th January 2012

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust
Rescheduled Outpatient Appointments – 2011/12

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This document is presented to update the Committee on activity relating to hospital initiated reschedules in The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust (DGFT) Outpatients Department. Rescheduling of appointments is a concern and inconvenience to our patients and this report seeks to set the scene and update on progress made during recent months.

2.0 Background

2.1 During 2010/11 there were 675,020 appointments scheduled to take place in Outpatients at DGFT, subsequently 73,366 were rescheduled during the same period. This figure represents 10.87% of the total number of appointments made between April 2010 and March 2011. As the reporting of hospital initiated cancellations is not a mandatory requirement for NHS Acute Trusts little data exists to compare our performance nationally.

2.2 43% of rescheduled appointments were made with less than 6 weeks' notice, this represents 4.68% of the total appointments issued for 2010/11. For new appointments Choose and Book offers some choice of appointment to patients but current processes provide little opportunity to offer choice for follow up appointments often resulting in a subsequent reschedule or non attendance.

2.3 A programme is currently being devised in an attempt to reduce the reschedule figure which will also result in improvements to our patients' experience. In June 2011 a pilot was introduced which considered an alternative approach to booking outpatient follow up appointments called Partial Booking. The process consists of the patient being placed in a waiting list group and a target date for an appointment applied. The patient then receives a letter inviting them to contact the Booking Team, 6 weeks before their target date, to arrange a mutually convenient appointment.

2.4 The existing systems allow patients to have their appointment details several months in advance; however it often becomes necessary to amend the booking nearer the time. Hospital rescheduling occurs if a clinic is cancelled or reduced. This is normally necessary because of the Consultant or Registrars availability. If a clinic is reduced changes to appointment times are sometimes needed. If an appointment is changed, and the timings have been adjusted by more than 15 minutes, the current system generates a new appointment letter. Patients can receive several letters confirming appointment details and DGFT recognise this is contributing to a decrease in patient satisfaction.

3.0 Ongoing Improvement Plan

- 3.1 The findings from the initial pilot were positive and, as a result, the recommendation has now been made to implement partial booking for all specialities across the Trust, using a phased approach. If approved, this programme of work will result in all 23 specialities at DGFT partially booking follow-up appointments by the summer of 2013.
- 3.2 As part of the programme for implementing partial booking across all specialities, clinic templates will be reviewed with the Medical Service Head/Clinical Lead. This review will take account of both demand and capacity within specialties and how clinics are planned for use when clinical staffing is reduced. Adherence to leave request policies will be reinforced and monitored to ensure clinicians where possible do not book leave with less than 6 weeks' notice which results in clinics being cancelled and rescheduled. This work will be undertaken in each area prior to partial booking being implemented and will result in fewer reschedules becoming necessary with less than 6 weeks notice given. Implementation and outcomes of the programme are being closely monitored via the Outpatient Management Executive Group which reports to The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust Board of Directors.
- 3.3 The likelihood of a patient rescheduling an appointment date/time should be greatly reduced as the appointment has been agreed with the patient no more than 6 weeks in advance.

4.0 Guidelines

- 4.1 The NHS Institution for Innovation and Improvement suggests that partial booking is recommended as a system which will encourage a reduction in hospital cancellations as well as reducing the number of DNAs. It has the potential to reduce both waiting times and improve the patients experience of outpatients.
- 4.2 NHS Connecting for Health supports the introduction of partial booking as a tool to improve overall capacity in Outpatients. It is recognised that follow up appointments have high DNA rates and by moving to partial booking and adjusting new to follow up ratios, this can create valuable capacity resulting in a more efficient department.

5.0 Equality Impact

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to ensure the introduction of partial booking is clear and applied consistently.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to ACCEPT this report for information and reassurance. The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust is committed to reducing the number of rescheduled Outpatient appointments and the negative impact this has on our patients overall experience.

Tessa Norris
Director of Community Services and Integrated Care
The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

.....

Contact Officer: **Mandy Green**
 Telephone: 01384 244404
 Email: Mandy.Green@dgh.nhs.uk