

Primary Care DNA (Did Not Attends) communications plan

March 2024



Objectives

1. Raise awareness of the fact that thousands of general practice team appointments are being wasted every month across BSW.
2. Understand the drivers to DNA and tackle the barriers and motivations appropriately.
3. Remind people of the importance of cancelling or changing their appointment time if they no longer need it or can no longer make it.
4. Highlight a connection between missed appointments and ongoing challenges with capacity for appointments.
5. Raise awareness of the method(s) that patients can use to cancel or amend appointments at their local GP practice.
6. Normalise the appropriate behaviour of cancelling appointments when need be.



- Research findings into the most common reasons for appointments to be missed indicating a need to educate that these are not acceptable reasons for not cancelling an appointment or that there are pinch points in the process to be addressed.

Patient-centred reasons

- Work or family/childcare issues
- Forgot appointment
- Transportation issues
- Too unwell
- Weather
- Felt better
- Couldn't be bothered
- Was in hospital
- Not aware of date
- Death in family

Role for comms:
Framing unacceptable behaviour

Clinic-specific reasons

- Doctor-patient relationship issues (including not with preferred GP and doctor reasons)
- Issues with booking system
- Miscommunication
- Monday appointment
- Not receiving a reminder

Role for comms:
Process smoothing

Key insights: BSW context

- 148,454 appointments missed between Dec 22 and Dec 23
- August 23: 22,615 = 3.5% of all booked appointments
- High frequency of DNAs in mental health, diabetes review, asthma review, smear, immunisations and ANP led appointments – allows appropriately targeted campaigns to those barriers and motivations

Clinic	Booked	DNA	%
GP		173	28 16.2%
ANP		196	39 19.9%
Mental Health		142	39 27.5%
Diabetes Review		50	5 10.0%
Asthma Review		119	30 25.2%
Dietitian		11	2 18.2%
HRT		58	6 10.3%
Physio		47	3 6.4%
Smears		243	54 22.2%
Imms		99	21 21.2%
Wound Care		152	22 14.5%
Contraception		63	5 7.9%
HCA		580	77 13.3%

Source: DNA by appointment type information provided from Westrop Saturday Enhanced Access Clinic from Feb – June 2023

Role for communications

Role for communications						
	1 Priming	2 Barrier addressing	3 Educating	4 Reinforcing	5 Normalising	6 Targeting
Aim	<p>Highlighting that there is an issue to be addressed</p> <p>Explaining the consequences of the issue</p>	<p>Removing barriers to attendance</p> <p>***Dependent on data, but other external studies can be sourced.***</p>	<p>Directing the public on the appropriate behaviour should someone no longer be able to attend an appointment</p>	<p>Acknowledge appropriate action being taken should someone no longer be able to attend an appointment</p>	<p>Create public acceptance that non-attendance is poor behaviour</p>	<p>Identifying known perpetrators by demographic, attitude, health condition and targeting look-alikes</p>
Channels	<p>ICB media release, stakeholder briefings, practice news</p>	<p>Outreach, System partner owned channels, primary care channels</p>	<p>Practice process comms</p>	<p>Practice process comms</p>	<p>Practice comms, potentially systems comms if a positive impact is observed</p>	<p>Dependent on opportunity but must be data-informed.</p>
Approach	<p>Editorially led, examples – qual and quant, impact stats</p>	<p>Case studies, endorsements</p>	<p>Websites, social media, answer machines, direct to patient comms</p>	<p>Direct to patient comms</p>	<p>Editorially led, examples – qual and quant, impact stats</p>	<p>Dependent on opportunity but must be data-informed.</p>

1 Priming

Overarching key messages

- Tens of thousands of GP appointments are being wasted each month due to patients not cancelling in advance when they are unable to attend
- Patients are asked to take action and always let their practice know if they cannot make their booking, as this will allow for appointment slots to be offered to others
- Not cancelling appointments also creates problems elsewhere in the health and care system, particularly in hospitals, as it is known people unable to see their GP will often seek help from an emergency department, which should only ever be used in life-threatening situations
- Practices understand that people can't always make their appointment, and teams are happy to reschedule if patients let them know as early as possible
- Most GP practices offer patients the opportunity to cancel their appointment quickly and easily by text message, while some also allow bookings to be managed online and via the NHS App

1 Priming *Messaging/framing*

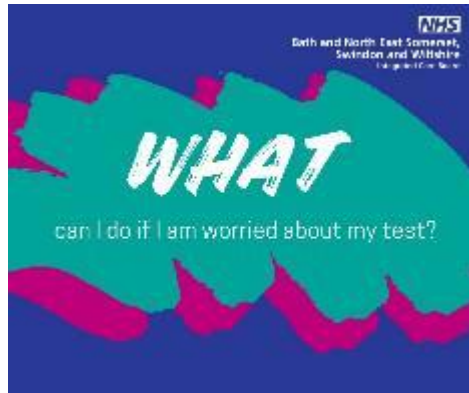
- Consideration for local messages and how to frame the issue for stakeholders:

- % missed
 - Total volume of appointments missed
 - Total number of patients missing appointments
 - Total number missed in BSW/locality/town/practice
 - Total PC hours lost
 - Described as hours within a working day/week
 - Total £ of PC hours lost
 - Other impact on patients
- To date
 - Month-on-month
 - Year-on year increase
 - Vs another time period
 - Vs another similar place

- Need to make it easy to understand (percentages require people to do maths), and relatable (massive numbers presented instantly make small efforts feel pointless)

Barriers

Cervical smear



We understand that getting a cervical screening, or smear test, can be nerve-racking or inconvenient, whether it's your first time or not. We all have our reasons for putting it off, but don't ignore that invite, even if you think everything's okay. If you're feeling anxious, here are a few tips to make the day a bit more comfortable:

- Wear a skirt or dress if you feel more comfortable; you can keep it on during the test and only remove your underwear.
- Request a nurse or doctor of a specific gender if it helps you feel more at ease during your cervical screening.
- Different-sized speculums are available; if the standard size is uncomfortable, ask to try another size.
- If lying on your back is uncomfortable, request to lie on your left side with your knees bent.
- If you're experiencing discomfort due to menopause, ask your nurse or doctor for a prescription of vaginal estrogen cream or pessary, which may provide relief.

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, but screening can help stop it before it starts.

Don't ignore your invite and remind your loved ones to book theirs. For more information visit nhs.uk/cervicalscreening



Around 570 women in England aged between 50 and 64 are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. That's why it is still important to attend your cervical screening even if you've had clear results in the past.

In England, women and people with a cervix between the ages of 25 and 64 should go for regular cervical screening when invited, every 3-5 years depending on their age.

Find out more at nhs.uk/cervicalscreening



Cervical screening is not a test for cancer. It helps prevent cervical cancer by checking for a virus called high-risk HPV. If left untreated, these cells can develop into cancer. Cell changes are easily treated and this prevents cervical cancer.

Cervical screening can help stop cancer before it starts, so don't ignore your invite. If you missed your last one, book an appointment with your GP practice or local sexual health clinic today. For more information visit nhs.uk/cervicalscreening



Cervical screening, or smear tests, are not tests for cancer. They help prevent cervical cancer by checking for a virus called high-risk HPV. If left untreated, these cells can develop into cancer. Cell changes are easily treated and this prevents cervical cancer.

Cervical screening saves lives - encourage those you love to get screened if they are overdue a test. For more information visit nhs.uk/cervicalscreening

2

Barriers

ANP/other practitioners

- GP? Think of me (Cornwall campaign) to be adapted for BSW.
- Toolkit containing posters, videos, social media graphics and copy.
- Roles include Care Coordinator, MHP, Clinical Pharmacist, Social Prescriber, Paramedic Practitioner, with the caveat that roles differ across practices.
- Any other roles to be featured?
- Campaign toolkit can also developed to include real faces from BSW practices.

GP?
Think of me

It's not always the doctor you need to see...

Richard
Mental Health Practitioner

I can help with all your mental health issues, including self-harm, and can help you to get the most out of your GP.

Team GP

GP?
Think of me

It's not always the doctor you need to see...

Sarah
Clinical Pharmacist

I can help with your medication, will make sure you're getting the most out of your GP, and can prescribe any changes.

Team GP

GP?
Think of me

It's not always the doctor you need to see...

Kijia
Physiotherapist

I can help you with all your physical health issues, including back pain, and can help you to get the most out of your GP.

Team GP

2 Barriers

Other areas

- Westrop data indicated other problem areas were:

Diabetes review

Immunisations

Mental health

Asthma review

- Can we look at over practices for trends?
- What intel do we have as to the barriers for these types of appointments to develop targeted comms?



2 Barriers Offer

- Change appointment offer
 - Reducing the forward booking time to 1 day contributed to a reduction in mean DNA rate from 7.8% to 3.9%.

3 Educate

Process communications

- Booking process
 - Instead of the usual 'Please call us if you need to change or cancel your booking' before hanging up, switch to 'Will you please call us if you need to change or cancel your booking?' therefore prompting the customer to make a verbal commitment by answering 'Yes'.¹
 - Previous results: 3.5% month-on-month reduction in DNAs
 - Why it works: People prefer to live up to their commitments
 - Patient records their own appointment
 - Previous results: Not available
 - Why it works: Involvement in a commitment to action
- Recall
 - When previous DNA'ers call to book a future appointment, remind them of their previous DNA behaviour, ask why they did not attend, nudge them to acknowledge if this was/wasn't acceptable behaviour previous, ask them to commit to cancelling in the future if needbe and highlight the options for doing so.

3 Educate

Process communications

- Direct access via telephone menus, website and SMS reminders to cancel or reschedule unwanted appointments



3 Educate

Process communications

- SMS reminders
 - Messages sent in advance of an appointment, also signposting the means to cancel if needed.
 - Previous results: No-attends rates were 39% lower in patients who received a reminder
 - Why it works: Prompts the patient in advance to action.
 - Message: This is a reminder of your appointment at <practice> at <time> <date>. Please call xxxxx or reply to text to cancel.“
- Telephone appointment reminders
 - Practice staff calling patients 24 hours in advance of their appointments to remind them to attend.
 - Previous results: Missed appointment rate reduced from 6.5% to 5.5%
 - Why it works: Dynamic exchange of information and verbal commitment to attend or cancel.

3 Educate *SMS reminder text*

- Example SMS reminder copy, ranked by effectiveness in terms of improving attendance and cancellation rates)

Most effective

Personalisation & Reciprocity

Hi [FirstName], you have an appointment at : [Practice] [Date] @ [Time]. One of our Doctors has made time in their diary. Please call [Tel] if you cannot attend. We look forward to seeing you – [Sender name], [Practice].

Avoided Loss

Appointment reminder: [Practice] [Date] @ [Time]. A missed appointment is a loss to [practice] and our patients, but we lose nothing if you attend or cancel early. Please call [Tel] if you cannot attend.

Example reasons

Reminder: [Practice] [Date] @ [Time]. Please call [Tel] if you cannot attend or no longer need the appointment. For example, you may have received care elsewhere.

Value

[Practice] [Date] @ [Time]. Appointments are very valuable, call [Tel] if you cannot attend so we can give it to someone else that needs it.

*Less effective but
still had an impact*

3 Educate

SMS reminder text

- Other potential routes (that were not included in the previous effectiveness test)

Instructions

You have an appointment at : [Practice] [Date] @ [Time]. Need to change or cancel your appointment? Please call the practice on [Tel].

Consequences on others

You have an appointment at : [Practice] [Date] @ [Time]. If you need to change or cancel your appointment call now so that we can help another patient in need. Please call the practice on [Tel].

Social norms

Most patients make a point to attend their GP appointments. If they can't make their appointments they also let the practice know. Need to change or cancel your appointment? Please call the practice on [Tel]



3 Educate

Process communications

- SMS follow-ups – no shows
 - Messages sent informing patients of missed appointments, signposting how to cancel if need be next and the importance of doing so.
 - Previous results: None available.
 - Why it works: An opportunity to reinforce that the behaviour is not ideal and what would have been preferable whilst the patient is in the mindset
 - Message: We are sorry to have missed you at your appointment at <location> at <time> <date>. Please call xxxx to rearrange, and please remember to cancel if your appointment is no longer necessary.

4 Reinforce

Process communications

- SMS follow-ups – Thanks
 - Messages sent to patients who keep their appointments and arrive on time thanking them.
 - Previous results: 31.7% reduction in DNAs compared to the past 12 months' average..
 - Why it works: Acknowledgement for good behaviour reinforces that behaviour and build loyalty .
 - Message: Thank you for attending your appointment today and arriving on time. Your help means we can see more patients

5 Normalise

- Reinforce appropriate behaviours and use that opportunity to create advocacy and normalise them.
- Embed acknowledgement in process communications and opportunities where you know advocates will be responsive e.g. waiting rooms.
- Shifts in behaviour can support future content for media etc.



5 Normalise *Waiting room posters*

- Research has shown that drawing attention to the regrettable frequency of unwanted behaviours can have the effect of normalizing those behaviours resulting in an increase in their incidence.
- These messages will also only be viewed by patients who actually attend - they could serve as a rather effective advertisement to the merits of non-attendance.¹
- They can serve as an opportunity to reinforce good behaviour and mobilise public support.



6 Targeting

Process communications

- The DNA issue derives from a relatively small volume of the BSW population so targeted and direct communications will be more effective rather than broadcast change behaviours.
- Broadcast communications on the channels which are freely available to use will be limited to advocating and normalising the right behaviours.
- Further data analysis and insight gathering on DNA'ers is required to develop more relevant and targeted communications to target them directly and their look-a-likes.

WHO

Demographics, access, underlying health issues

WHY

Do they DNA?

WHEN

Are DNAs more prevalent for particular days or times, or how far in advance appointments are made?

HOW

Process and understanding blockers? Is the user journey working? Are there access problems?

WHAT

Particular appointment types or locations? Alternative behaviours?

Campaign visuals - Thank You



Bath and North East Somerset,
Swindon and Wiltshire
Integrated Care Board



If you need to cancel your appointment, please choose one of these options:

- Call:
- Go online:
- Email:

Empty belly posters for practices to enter their own contact information.

Three routes:

- Real people
- Graphic
- GPs

Available as A4 posters or digital screens



Campaign visuals - Value

Empty belly posters for practices to enter their own contact information and number of appointments missed
Two routes:

- Graphic
- GP image

Available as A4 poster or digital screen



Thank you
for attending your appointment today

Unfortunately,

patients failed to attend their appointments last month.

Dr Renée, GP,
St Augustine's Surgery, Keynsham

A missed appointment is a loss to the practice and patients like you.

Please support your practice, by asking friends and family to cancel their appointments if they are no longer needed by calling the practice.

Call:
Visit:
Email:



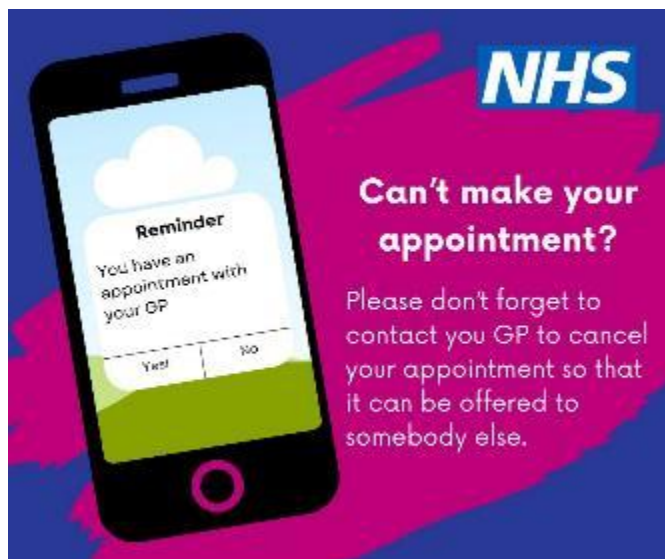
Thank you
for attending your appointment today

patients failed to attend their appointments last month.

A missed appointment is a loss to the practice of patients like you.

Please help us to help you, by asking friends and family to cancel their appointments if they are no longer needed by calling the practice.

Social media - graphics



Social media – post text

Don't need your GP appointment anymore?
Cancel it and help someone else get seen sooner.
Contact your surgery to cancel or reschedule.

Have you booked an appointment you no longer need or can't attend?
Don't forget to cancel it so your GP surgery can offer the appointment to someone else –
not only will you help us reduce our number of missed appointments, but you'll also help
someone else be seen more quickly!
Contact your surgery to cancel or reschedule.

If you have a GP appointment coming up that you don't need - please cancel it so others
can book them.
Contact your surgery to cancel or reschedule.

For every missed GP Practice appointment, it is a missed opportunity to see another
patient. Simply by cancelling unwanted appointments, even if it is a few minutes before, it
means that other patients have an opportunity to be seen more quickly.
Contact your surgery to cancel or reschedule.

Booked a GP appointment you can no longer attend? Don't forget to cancel it.
Contact your surgery to cancel or reschedule.

