

**Request for information under the Freedom of Information Act – 2021.813
Released – 7 June 2021**

Thank you for your email dated 7 May 2021 requesting information patient appointment reminders and letter delivery.

Please find detailed below a summary of your original request together with our response.

Original request:

Patient Appointment Reminders

1) Do you remind your patients of their appointments in any capacity?

Yes.

2) If your patient appointment reminders are outsourced, who completes the delivery?

SMS reminders are not outsourced, they are sent directly via the electronic patient record system.

3) If your patient appointment reminders are outsourced, when was the contract initiated?

Not applicable.

**4) What communication modes do you use to send the communication to your patients?
(select all that apply)**

a. SMS

i. If yes, can patients reply to the reminder via SMS?

We send SMS appointment reminders but patients cannot reply to the reminder via SMS.

b. Automated landline calls

i. If yes, can the patients select to confirm, cancel or rebook their appointment?

This method is not used at our trust.

c. Agent calls

This method is not used at our trust.

d. Postal letters

Some services send out postal letters reminding patients of their appointments.

Chairman John Goulston Chief Executive Paul Bentley

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e. Staff delivering phone call reminders

Some services deliver phone call reminders.

5) Are your reminders delivered to all patients, regardless of their pathway within outpatients?

a. Which specialties are reminders utilised?

At present the following services utilise SMS appointment reminders:

Children's therapies	Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics	Adult Speech & language Therapy
Cardiac Nursing	Cardiac Rehabilitation	Community Neuro Rehab
Children's Bladder & Bowel	Children's Continence Products	Children's Respiratory Nursing
Continence	Children's short breaks	Epilepsy
Lymphoedema	Pharmacy	Pulmonary Rehab
School Health		

6) Do you reminder patients outside of outpatients? For instance, Inpatients and Radiology?

a. Which specialties are reminders utilised?

Our inpatient stays are all non-elective stays and all other services we provide are outpatient services. Therefore, this question is not applicable to our Trust.

7) Since implementing an appointment reminder service, what decrease have you seen in your DNA rate?

Services implemented the SMS appointment reminder service at different times. Some services have seen a decrease in the DNA rate, whilst others have seen a slight increase. The table below outlines the average DNA rate before and after initiating the SMS appointment reminder service, using DNA data from April 2020 to April 2021:

Division (Yellow is when they implemented text reminders)	Average Before	Average After
Adult Speech and Language Therapy	3.83%	3.86%
Children's Community Nursing	4.27%	2.31%
Children's Continence Product Service	9.62%	4.93%
Children's Therapies	7.52%	5.23%
Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics	4.59%	4.47%
Community chronic pain	6.34%	7.90%
Community orthopaedics	6.84%	6.65%
Community Paediatrics	11.26%	9.51%
East Sussex School Nursing	15.87%	10.53%
MSK Physio	8.65%	9.37%
Pulmonary Rehab	2.53%	1.50%
School Health	15.26%	6.16%
TB Service	2.03%	1.97%

8) If your patient appointment reminders are outsourced, when is the contract due to expire and expected to go to tender?

Not applicable, text reminder service is not outsourced.

9) What is the expected value of this contract (£)?

Not applicable, text reminder service is not outsourced.

Letter delivery

1) When you send a letter to a patient (or CC letters), is this completed in house or outsourced to an external company?

Some services complete this in-house, others outsource.

2) If your letters are outsourced, who is your supplier?

Synertec

3) If your letters are outsourced, when was the contract initiated?

The current contract with the current provider started on 1 April 2021.

4) Do you deliver letters via digital means or are they delivered solely by post?

Letters are delivered by both digital means and by post.

5) If your letters are outsourced, are you delivering all letters to patients via the supplier, regardless of their specialty within outpatients?

a. If No, what specialities are receiving letters via the supplier?

Yes letters produced by Synertec are posted by them. Specialities, using this service are:

Adult Speech & Language & Community Nutrition & Dietetics Central Administration
Bladder & Bowel Nursing Paediatrics
Child Health Applications
Communication & Patient Engagement
Community Orthopaedics
Control Accounts
Dartford Community Paediatrics Administration
Dover & Deal Rehab Team
Dover Community Nursing
East Sussex School Nursing
Eastern & Coastal Kent Chronic Pain Service
Employee Relations
Gravesham Community Hospital Physiotherapy
Health Checks - Core
Kent Immunisation Team
Looked After Children

Maidstone Community Paediatrics
Maidstone Community Paediatrics Administration
Management of East Sussex Children's Therapies
Management of Health Visiting
Management of Health Visiting & Sexual Health
Management of Human Resources
Management of School Nursing
Paediatric Audiology
Paediatric Audiology New Born Health Screening Programme
Podiatry Administration Hub
Polegate East Sussex Therapies
Referral Management Centre
South Kent Coast Physiotherapy

If your letters are outsourced, do you send letters to patients outside of outpatients? For instance, Inpatients and Radiology?

b. If so, which specialities are outsourced?

Our inpatient stays are all non-elective stays and all other services we provide are outpatient services. Therefore, this question is not applicable to our Trust.

6) Are you using digital dictation for your outcome letters?

Yes, some services use digital dictation to produce their outcome letters.

7) How do you fulfil the outcome letters?

a. Are they distributed to local GP's electronically?

b. How do you distribute to non-local GP's and recipient CC's e.g. patient copy?

Outcome letters are distributed to GPs electronically. Letters to non-local GP's and recipient CC's are sent by post.

8) If your letters are outsourced, when is the contract due to expire and expected to go to tender?

The current contract with the current provider expires on 31 March 2023. We are expecting to being the re-procurement process mid-2022.

9) What is the expected value of this contract (£)?

The contract is activity based, so the amount can fluctuate. However, we can confirm that the average expenditure over the last 3 years has been approximately £217,500 per year.

10) Is the Trust using digital/remote check in for patients?

No, the Trust is not using digital/remote check-in for patients.

11) If so, is this an internal solution or outsourced?

a. If outsourced, who is your supplier?

Not applicable, see our response to the previous question.

12) Does the Trust have a PIFU programme?

No, the Trust does not have a PIFU programme.

***13) Is there solution to communicate with patients on a PIFU?
If outsourced, who is the supplier?***

Question 14 is not applicable as we do not have a PIFU programme.