

Appointment Management and Cancellation Policy

It is the aim of this practice to provide quality dental care to our patients and to use clinical time effectively. To achieve this aim, we have an appointment management and cancellation policy.

Management of appointments

We invest in the latest technology, to allow our patients to make or reschedule appointments easily. Our appointment system supports timely access to care and treatment, allows patients to access services at a time that suits them and minimises the length of time people have to wait. Appointments can be made or rescheduled by calling our dedicated appointments line on 01225 312847.

Reminders

E-mail reminders are sent 2 weeks and 7 days before any appointment. Text reminders are sent to patients 3 days before any appointment and patients are requested to inform the practice of any changes to their contact details.

Cancellation or delay of an appointment by the practice

We will only cancel or delay a patient's appointment in unavoidable circumstances. In such cases, we will take the following steps:

- The patient will be contacted as soon as the practice is aware of the need to cancel or delay the appointment. We will explain the reason for the cancellation or delay
- At the time of contact, the patient will be offered a new appointment at the earliest time available
- If the patient is unable to commit to a new appointment during that contact, we will ask them to get in touch at a later time, when we will offer them a priority appointment

Cancellation of an appointment or missed appointment by a patient

Your appointment is specifically reserved for you, patients are requested to give at least 48 hours' notice to cancel a dental appointment. Cancellations should be made by telephone on: 01225 312847.

Late or short notice cancellations, less than 48 hours before the appointment time, and missed appointments may represent a cost to the practice, when other patients could have been seen in the time set aside for the patient.

There is a fee for **private dental appointments** that are missed or cancelled with less than 48 hours' notice. The fee is based on the length of the appointment.

Rebooking of appointments that have been missed or cancelled within 48 hours, may be subject to a deposit or full payment of the appointment requested at the time of booking.

Denplan patients - As stated in the Denplan care contract under section 10 'Your responsibilities'.

Patients are responsible for keeping appointments made with the practice team and patients must pay any 'missed' appointment fees should a patient fail to attend an appointment.

In England, you **do not formally "register" with an NHS dentist**. Instead, you join a dental practice as a patient for the duration of a course of treatment.

In 2006, the NHS introduced a new contract with dentists. Before this, dentists were paid per person registered on a list of permanent patients, combined with set fees for each treatment delivered.

The new contract instead paid dentists per 'unit of dental activity'

You can attend any dentist - even if the practice is based in a different area from where you live - as long as they can see you and are taking on NHS patients. This is because technically, the arrangement between a dentist and patient only lasts as long as your course of treatment. It doesn't give you the right to stay permanently registered with the same dental practice. But your dentist may choose to keep you on an informal list of regular patients and invite you back for regular check-ups. You will remain on their patient list as long as you have **appointments at least every two years**.

The contract means a dentist has no long-term obligation to see patients on the NHS unless they are undergoing active treatment or dental work already carried out is under guarantee.

We do not make a charge for NHS patients for a late cancellation or missed appointment. However:

- Your appointment is specifically reserved for you.
- Failure to attend your appointment results in wasted clinical resources.
- NHS England has the right to ask you to find another dental practice if you continue to miss appointments. This does not affect your ability to seek NHS care at another NHS practice.
- This is in line with the NHS choices websites that states 'Your dentist can terminate your treatment if you miss your appointment without informing your dental practice.
- If you are a new patient to the practice and you miss your first NHS appointment, you will not be offered another appointment on the NHS and you will only be seen on a private basis thereafter.
- At our practice if more than two NHS dental appointments are missed or cancelled with less than 48 hours' notice, within a two-year period, no further appointments will be offered.

In addition to the above, The British Dental Association (BDA) has launched the 'Was not Brought' toolkit to support safeguarding of children and young people, up to the age of 17, who miss appointments, often for reasons beyond their control.

If your child misses an appointment we will:

- Try to contact their parent/ guardian by phone within 24 hours to rebook the appointment.
- If there is no response after 2 attempts, an email or letter will be sent to the child's address, which asks the child's parent/guardian to contact the practice as soon as possible to remake the appointment.
- If there is no contact within 3 weeks we will send a letter to the child's GP. Health professionals are required to share information about missed appointments and repeated cancellations for the benefit and safeguarding of children. People we may inform of any concerns include the child's family doctor (GP), school nurse, health visitor, social worker and/or the dentist (or other professional) who referred you to us.
- At this point we will discharge the child from our care but will still be willing to arrange a further appointment if contact is made in the near future, subject to NHS policy and availability.

It is our aim to telephone or write to patients after a missed appointment to understand the reason for non-attendance and to inform them about any fee or decision about their NHS dental care. We understand that cancellations are sometimes unavoidable due to illness or emergencies and we will take account of all valid circumstances.

Any appeals about missed or cancelled appointment decisions by a patient should be made in writing to the Practice Manager.