

Ref: FOI/CAD/ID 3754

Please reply to:
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Freedom of Information Act 2000

I am writing in response to your request for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to Dummy appointments.

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

For the purposes of clarification I understand the term "dummy appointments" to mean dummy clinic slots made available to patients booking via the NHS e-referral services. The appointments do not exist and the patient should not attend. I believe that these slots allow hospitals to view patient's clinical details and then transfer patients to an internal administration system.

You can find the term referred to in this NHS Digital document http://content.digital.nhs.uk/media/17199/Best-Practice-Guidelines-for-Commissioners/pdf/NHS_e-Referral_Service_Commissioner_Best_Practice_Guidance.pdf

Please find my questions below:

- 1. Does your NHS trust use a dummy appointment system?*
- 2. Please elaborate on the answer to question 1 to explain why, or why not.*
- 3. If the answer to question 1 is no, has the Trust ever used a dummy appointment system in the past?*
- 4. If the answer to question 1 is yes, how many dummy appointments have been made available by your Trust in the past three calendar years (2014, 2015, 2016)? Please provide the figure for each year separately. What percentage of total appointments does this represent?*
- 5. If the answer to question 1 is yes, how are dummy appointments cancelled?*
- 6. If the answer to question 1 is yes, are patients who have been allocated a dummy appointment made aware that the slot should not be attended?*
- 7. If the answer to question 1 is yes, how much has it cost your NHS Trust to administer cancellations of dummy appointments over the past 3 calendar years (2014/2015/2016)? Please provide separate figures for each year.*

8. *How many Appointment Slot Issues (ASI's) resulting from the NHS e-referral service has the Trust had in the past calendar year?*
9. *Has the Trust had to pay any financial penalties for missing a contractual target ensuring sufficient NHS e-referral appointments are available? Please provide figures from the past 3 calendar years (2014/2015/2016).*
10. *Are "dummy appointments" included in your waiting list statistics submitted to NHS England?*
11. *Are patients who have generated ASI's included in your waiting times statistics submitted to NHS England?*

1. Yes

2. PCT could refer cancer patients via e-referral then Trust could book accordingly

3. N/A

4. Dummy clinics for Apr 2015 to Dec 2015 was 1652, data prior to Apr2015 is not held in a format that can be accessed. Dummy clinics for the whole of 2016 calendar year was 2552.

5. As part of the booking process the dummy appointment is cancelled when the actual clinic appointment is booked.

6. Yes

7. As part of the booking process the dummy appointment is cancelled when the actual clinic appointment is booked.

8. Under Section 21 of the Act we are not required to provide information in response to a request if the information is already reasonably accessible to you. The information you requested is available from <https://www.digital.nhs.uk/e-Referral-Service/reports-and-statistics/Appointment-Slot-Issue-reports>

9. This data is not routinely collected and the Trust is therefore unable to answer.

10. Dummy appointments are not included in any statistics as they are deleted out prior to running any reports.

11. As part of the booking process the dummy appointment is cancelled when the actual clinic appointment is booked.