Patient Appointment Attendance and Timeliness Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

Our goal is to ensure every patient receives the best possible care in a timely manner. We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining an efficient and respectful environment for all.

At White Horse Medical Practice, we are committed to providing timely and high-quality care to all patients. Timely attendance at scheduled appointments is essential to ensure the smooth and efficient running of our clinics. Late arrivals can disrupt clinic schedules, causing delays for other patients and increasing strain on healthcare staff. To maintain excellent care, we ask patients to adhere to the following policy.

Policy Statement

- **Patients are expected to arrive on time for their appointments.** If a patient is late, it may not be possible to accommodate them on the same day, and their appointment may need to be rescheduled.
- **Exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.** We aim to minimise disruptions and ensure that every patient receives timely and effective care.

1.2 Status

The organisation will aim to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have regarding the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

2 Policy

2.1 Patient responsibility

Patients are asked to:-

- Arrive on time for their scheduled appointment
- Allow sufficient time to travel to the clinic, considering potential delays (e.g., traffic or parking)
- Notify the clinic if they expect to be late or need to cancel their appointment
- Follow pre-appointment instructions provided to avoid delays

2.2 Practice responsibility

To ensure that appointments run on time, we will:-

- Schedule appointments appropriately
- Ensuring enough time is allocated for each patient
- Monitor appointment times and address any recurring delays
- Communicate the importance of punctuality to all patients
- Implement efficient check-in procedures to reduce waiting times
- Regularly review and improve scheduling processes

2.3 Management of late arrivals

Late arrivals will be managed as follows:-

- Patients who arrive **more than 5 minutes late for a Healthcare Assistant (HCA) appointment** or **more than 7 minutes late for a Nurse appointment** may not be seen that day and will need to reschedule
- The Patient Services team will notify the relevant clinician of the patient's arrival and the delay
- Patients who arrive late will be asked to wait in the reception area until the clinician confirms whether they can still be seen
- If the patient can be seen, it will be documented in the clinical system as "Late for appointment." If the patient cannot be seen, it will be coded in the clinical system as "Patient too late". These codes will be added by the clinician.

2.4 Management of waiting patients

If a patient has been waiting for a while, staff will:-

- Investigate the reason for the delay by asking the patient who/what appointment they are waiting for
- Communicate the situation to the relevant team and apologise to the patient where necessary

- In the case of an administrative error, staff will promptly notify the clinician and ensure that the patient's appointment was not missed or rescheduled incorrectly

2.5 Management of timed telephone appointments

For **timed telephone appointments**, patients are expected to be available at the scheduled time. If a patient is unavailable:-

- A message will be left stating that the clinician will call again
- A second attempt will be made, but if unsuccessful, the patient will need to rebook the appointment

For **untimed telephone appointments**, the clinician will attempt to contact the patient up to three times. If unsuccessful, the patient will be required to rebook.

Recording of Information

All patient interactions regarding late arrivals and rescheduling will be recorded in the system to maintain accurate records.

Patient Awareness

If a patient is late and their appointment is cancelled, this will be marked as "Did Not Attend." Patients may need to reschedule, which could result in longer wait times.

2.6 Clinic lateness

If the clinic is running behind, patients will be informed at the earliest opportunity, at the time of check-in. Potential reasons for delay include:-

- Medical emergencies
- Complex appointments overrunning
- Staff delays due to factors beyond their control
- Administrative errors

Patients will be kept informed, and if they wish to file a complaint due to clinic lateness, the Complaints Procedure will be available.

Associated documents

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