



**An Audit into how text messaging parents/carers reminders of their appointments influences attendance rates in paediatric community clinics**

**Aim/s of project**

- To reduce the number of missed appointments by 50% in 2 community clinics in Dundee.

**Briefly describe what have you done and which service users and / or colleagues have you worked with**

- A 6 months study between September 07 and February 08.
- Two paediatric community clinics were identified, both in areas of high social deprivation and both experiencing high "did not attend" (DNA) rates.
- Parents/carers of all current cases, reviews and new admissions were asked to give their consent to sign up to the text messaging service.
- The therapist was responsible for sending the text reminders

**Data Recorded**

- Number of parents who accepted the service.
- Number of parents who declined and their reason.
- Delivery of text message for each child in therapist's personal diary.
- DNA's and cancellation rates
- DNA and cancellation rates from the same period in the previous year were collected for comparison.

**What interested you in doing this project, why did you do it?**

- Concern and frustration by the number of missed appointments within the community clinics and long waiting lists
- High administrative time in following up parents/carers who missed appointments
- We wanted to engage with the parents/carers we worked with more effectively and find new ways of supporting attendance at clinic.
- Awareness of other departments in NHS Tayside who used text messaging for this purpose

**What difference do you expect this project to make to patient care?**

- We anticipated that the text reminders would help busy parents/carers remember appointments enabling them to attend regularly with their child and complete blocks of therapy offered.
- We felt it would be an effective way of engaging with parents during an episode of care.

**Outcomes or evidence of impact so far**

- Texting parents/carers was a quick and easy way of keeping in regular contact and sharing information regarding appointments.
- DNA rates did NOT fall in either clinic during the period of the study.
- Uptake to the service was high with many parents expressing how helpful they would find this.
- Although it did help some parents to attend more regularly, it did not engage the 'hard to reach' parents.

### **Follow on work**

The outcome of the project has led us to consider in more depth reasons for Failure to attend. We are now working in coordination with the Dundee Healthy Living Initiative and the Public Health Department to do this. This work started in July 08.

### **Aims**

To work with parents/carers to identify reasons why they have not attended previous appointments as well as to ascertain their thoughts as to what we can do to help them access our service.

### **Method**

- Public health colleagues are considering the use of “Social Marketing” – “a tool to change behavior” within this work. It is a relatively new concept in Scotland and is in the early stages of development/use.
- Speech and Language Therapy and the Healthy Living Initiative Team are currently carrying out a series of home visits jointly. The SLT will assess the child’s speech, language and communication skills whilst the Healthy Living Team member completes a questionnaire regarding our service with the parent/carer.

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