

**Trust Board Meeting in Public: Wednesday 12 September 2018**

**TB2018.77**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Patient Perspective: Learning from complaints</b> <b>Lessons learnt from a complaint and the processes used to respond to the complaint</b>
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<b>Status</b>	For information and learning
<b>History</b>	Patient stories are presented to the Trust Board or the Quality Committee. This paper focuses on the processes and lessons that could be learnt from a complaint.

<b>Board Lead(s)</b>	Mrs Sam Foster, Chief Nurse			
<b>Key purpose</b>	Strategy	<b>Assurance</b>	Policy	Performance

## Executive Summary

1. The Board Quality Report in May 2018 highlighted 11 themes that the Trust will track the improvements required for service delivery based on learning from complaints.
2. The paper provides an opportunity to highlight lessons learnt from a patient's closed complaint, including the investigation undertaken and the Trust response.
3. The original complaint and response are appended to this paper.
4. The Trust Board is asked to reflect upon the lessons learnt from the patient's experience that led to the complaint. This highlights the difficulties that occur when patient's appointments are cancelled at short notice.

### Issues raised in the complaint:

The main focus of the complaint was the distress caused to a patient who had received late notice of the cancellation of her appointment, compounded by subsequent confusing information and an extended wait for the replacement appointment.

### 5. Recommendation

The Trust Board is asked to reflect on the lessons learnt and assurance gained through the thoroughness of the investigation processes.

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explore the consequences and lessons learnt from the experience of a patient (Ms B), in which their appointment was cancelled at short notice. Ms B submitted a formal complaint, which was investigated, and the Trust provided formal response.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. Consent was obtained from the complainant for presenting this paper to Trust Board to offer the opportunity for further learning.
- 2.2. In August 2018, the complaints and PALS team noticed that there had recently been an increase in the number of complaints and PALS issues about cancelled operations, particularly in the Surgery and Oncology (S&O) Division. The September 2018 Chief Nurse Quality Report, reported to the Trust Board, provides analysis of the feedback recently received through complaints, PALS issues, and Friends and Family Test feedback. The complaints recently made about cancelled operations have been received too recently to have been closed, so it was not possible to feature one of these as the patient story this month. While this complaint refers to a cancelled appointment in the ENT Department (Neurosciences, Orthopaedics, Trauma and Speciality Surgery (NOTSS) division), it provides further context about a patient's experience of having their planned care cancelled at short notice.

## 3. The complaint

- 3.1. The timeline of events is shown in Appendix 1.
- 3.2. Ms B was contacted on the 29<sup>th</sup> April, two days before their routine ENT appointment was due to take place (1<sup>st</sup> May). Ms B was not given a reason for this, as the person who contacted her did not know why the appointment was cancelled. Another person was also unable to give Ms B a reason, or rebook an appointment, which caused her to contact the PALS team to ask them to resolve the issue.
- 3.3. Ms B later learned that the appointment was cancelled because of annual leave.
- 3.4. Ms B's appointment was eventually rescheduled for November, which caused her to submit a formal complaint.
- 3.5. Ms B experienced issues with communication:
  - The appointment was cancelled at short notice.
  - There was a lack of information provided about the reason the appointment was cancelled.
  - Ms B had difficulty contacting the department.
  - Ms B was told that she was "lucky to have had an appointment in May". Ms B explained in her complaint letter that she did not feel lucky, having waited two months, and needing to have a hospital appointment in the first place.
  - Ms B asked to speak to the service manager, who left a voicemail with Ms B, and said she would call her back but did not.
  - A member of staff said she would only pass on a message *if* she saw the Specialist Surgery Service Manager, and could not provide a contact number.

- Ms B was told that the Specialist Surgery Service Manager did not work in the department.
- Ms B was initially told that it was not possible to book an appointment and was then booked an appointment for November.

3.6. The complaint was investigated and an apology and response was sent on 30<sup>th</sup> May by the Chief Nurse, Sam Foster.

#### **4. Processes and best practices undertaken**

- 4.1. An investigation was undertaken by the Ophthalmology Operational Service Manager. The response letter apologised for the cancellations, and explained that while the consultant had booked their annual leave 6 weeks or more in advance, the clinics had been booked further in advance than that, due to the demand for appointments in the departments exceeding the capacity of the consultants. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to inform patients about the cancelled clinic earlier than the day before, due to reduced administrative staff in the department.
- 4.2. The reason for the long waiting times is that the department currently has two ENT consultant vacancies, which have been recruited to, but are not yet in post.
- 4.3. The department were able to expedite Ms B's appointment to 16<sup>th</sup> May.
- 4.4. Ms B received an apology for the issues she experienced with communication, which were partly caused by lack of administrative resources in the department. This story highlights the importance of careful and sensitive communication and the and the pressure on both patients and staff when appointments are not going according to plan.

#### **5. Lessons to be learnt from this complaint**

- 5.1. The department has recognised the issues Ms B experienced with communication.
- 5.2. Waiting times in the department will reduce when the two new ENT consultants start working in the department.

#### **6. Recommendations**

The Trust Board is asked to reflect on the lessons learnt and assurance gained through the investigation processes, as well as the honest and compassionate response given to the patient.

#### **Ms Sam Foster, Chief Nurse**

Report prepared by:

Caroline Heason, Head of Safeguarding

Ella Reeves, Patient Experience Manager

30 August 2018

**Appendix 1: timeline of events**

1 <sup>st</sup> March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms B referred by GP to ENT for a routine appointment.</li> <li>Ms B initially scheduled an appointment for 20<sup>th</sup> August, but was able to bring it forward to 13<sup>th</sup> July and then 1<sup>st</sup> May.</li> </ul>
29 <sup>th</sup> April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms B received text message reminder of appointment.</li> <li>At 3pm Ms B received a phone call from a member of staff to inform her that the appointment was cancelled, but no reason given.</li> </ul>
30 <sup>th</sup> April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms B contacted the department to ask when the rescheduled appointment would be, but the person she spoke to was unable to help her.</li> <li>No reason given for the appointment being cancelled. Ms B told that others had been waiting longer and their appointments took priority.</li> <li>Ms B contacted PALS, who contacted the ENT on her behalf.</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2018 (morning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms B was contacted by a staff member regarding the PALS enquiry, who said that Ms B would have an appointment before the appointment was due to take place. Ms B clarified that this was not possible as this had already passed.</li> <li>The staff member said that Ms B was lucky to have had an appointment in May. The staff member was unable to give a reason for the cancellation, but when Ms B asked, she found out and informed Ms B that this was because of annual leave.</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2018 (afternoon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms B received a voicemail from the Specialist Surgery Service Manager saying she would call again later that day or the next day, which did not happen.</li> <li>Ms B tried to contact the Specialist Surgery Service Manager and was informed by a staff member that she did not work in the ENT department. The staff member said she was unable to provide a contact number, and would pass on a message to the Specialist Surgery Service Manager, but only if she saw her.</li> </ul>
9 <sup>th</sup> May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms B continued to try to get in contact with the Specialist Surgery Service Manager, who called her back.</li> <li>Ms B informed that the appointment was rescheduled to November.</li> <li>Ms B submitted a formal complaint.</li> </ul>

**Appendix 2: Ms B's complaint email**

To whom it may concern at the office of the Chief Executive,

I am writing to make a formal complaint against the ENT department at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

I was referred by my GP on the 1st of March 2018 for a routine appointment, at that time I scheduled an appointment for the 20th August as that was the earliest available. I tried to bring the appointment forward myself through the NHS e-referrals portal and I was successfully able to bring it forward to the 13th July, and then again to the 1st of May.

On Sunday 29th April, I received a text message reminder of my appointment, at about 3pm I got a phone call from \*\*\*\* to inform me that my appointment had to be cancelled, and she couldn't tell me why. The doctor was unavailable and she said this could be for a number of reasons such as "emergency surgery, or being on call", she said she was brought in to help cancel this list and didn't know more about it. I asked her to pass on the message that I would like to speak to someone in the department about my appointment, and the reason it was cancelled.

I contacted the department on the Monday morning to ask when my appointment would be rescheduled to, but the person was unable to help me. I asked why the clinic was cancelled and I was given the same response as before "could be a number of reasons". I asked to have my appointment re-booked and the person said she couldn't, as they are waiting for additional lists. I was told that there are people who have been waiting longer than me and that they take priority.

I wasn't satisfied with the lack of information, and their inability to re-book the appointment, I contacted PALS, who contacted the department on my behalf.

On Thursday 3rd May I was contacted by a member of staff regarding the PALS complaint. I don't have the name of the member of staff, but I assume PALS would do (and \*\*\* \*\* who told me that a member of the elective access team passed a message to her about my complaint). This person told me that I would have an appointment before my scheduled appointment was due to take place, I pointed out that would be impossible as it had already passed. She had clearly not read my complaint and assumed I was calling about the July/August appointments. When I pointed this out, she told me I was lucky to have had a May appointment. I take offence at the use of the word "lucky", I don't think I'm lucky that I have (at that point) waited 2 months, and had to keep logging in to try and bring my appointment forward. A lucky person doesn't have hospital appointments. She assured me that my appointment would be scheduled when she had more lists available, and that I wouldn't have to wait longer than my original appointments. I asked again why the clinic was cancelled, she initially responded in the same way as the other two ladies I spoke to earlier in the week, but when I asked for the exact reason, she went to check and I was told it was because of annual leave.

I asked to speak with the service manager, and she said she would pass the message on. I did receive a voicemail from \*\*\* \*\* on Thursday afternoon saying she would try again later, or the following morning. She didn't. I tried calling her via switchboard, and through the department (yesterday an employee of the ENT department told me \*\*\* \*\* didn't work there- and that she just sometimes helped out - I asked if she could give me her number-

she couldn't- I asked if she could pass a message to her- she told me she would *if* she sees her). I don't understand why I was told that \*\*\* \*\* doesn't work in ENT?

I tried \*\*\* several times (via switchboard), and left a message for her to call me back. Today (9th May), I again left a message with the ENT elective access team, and she did call me- where she informed me that my appointment had been rescheduled to November. I'm outraged by this, by the time I will be seen for my first appointment I will have had to wait 9 months. This is not acceptable, and this is a result of poor management of that department.

I had an appointment that was cancelled with less than 48 hours notice, because someone didn't do their job correctly. Either a doctor asked for annual leave with 2 days notice, and a clinic in an already stretched department was cancelled without an alternative, or the leave was agreed earlier and the member of staff responsible didn't action the request until two days before. I raised this issue with \*\*\*, who said that the department was stretched and other work took priority. I would like to know, what other work takes priority for elective access staff over managing clinics?

I am in tears as I write this. The response from the elective access team members whose names I unfortunately don't have, and their manager \*\*\* have been extremely upsetting, and do not alleviate my concerns. They have made a mistake and they need to work to fix it, it's unacceptable that I have to wait 9 months. I resent being lied to by members of the ENT department at several occasions, and I'm shocked at the way the department is managed. Perhaps instead of bringing in administrative staff to work Sundays cancelling lists, they might consider bringing in locum consultants to ensure clinics can run. It is my understanding that doctors usually need to give 6 weeks notice for annual leave requests (publicly available information regarding NHS contracts)- this means that for 6 weeks at least, if not more, the elective access team had other priorities, and have added 6 months to my wait.

I would like to know what will be done to make sure this doesn't happen again, and I would like to know if anything is being done to bring my appointment forward? Why has someone booked me an appointment for November just before my phone call with \*\*\*, when during all the earlier phone calls I was told that it can't be booked, its waiting for extra clinics to be set up?

Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information, or if anything is unclear.

## Appendix 3 – response from the Trust

**Oxford University Hospitals**

NHS Foundation Trust

Our Ref: 17187765LCHE  
30 May 2018

The John Radcliffe  
Headley Way  
Headington  
Oxford  
OX3 9DU  
Tel: 01865 226889

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Thank you for bringing your concerns regarding your Outpatient appointment within the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Department to my attention in your email of 9 May 2018. I am sorry that you have had reason to complain and I appreciate that you will not have done so lightly.

Your concerns have been investigated on my behalf by [REDACTED], who is the Deputy Operational Services Manager responsible for the ENT Department.

[REDACTED] would firstly like to extend his apologies for the several cancellations you have experienced for your Outpatient appointment in the ENT Department.

As you note in your email, following a referral by your GP for a routine appointment, an appointment was scheduled for 20 August 2018, you had managed to bring your appointment forward using the e-Referral website and booking into an earlier available ENT Outpatient appointment timeslot.

Following [REDACTED]'s investigations it is apparent that your appointment on 1 May 2018 was rescheduled due to clinician annual leave. Please be assured that the Trust's policy is for clinicians to provide as much notice as possible of requests for leave and this is booked at least 6 weeks prior to being taken. Regrettably, due to issues with capacity in the ENT Department, appointments have often been scheduled well in advance of this time period and therefore may require rescheduling. It is regrettable that you were only notified of the cancellation of your appointment just days before you were due to attend, this was the result of reduced administrative staff at the time.

[REDACTED] was sorry to learn that during your discussions with the Department's administrators, the reason for the cancelled appointment was not clearly explained to you. Regrettably, the ENT Service's appointments may require rescheduling for a range of reasons, this includes, as explained above, Consultants' annual leave, and also urgent patient referrals or emergency cases which require priority over a routine appointment.

[REDACTED] is sorry to learn that you did not find subsequent discussions with the Service staff helpful regarding the change in date of your appointment. I understand [REDACTED] contacted you to discuss your concerns and I am pleased to learn that his efforts resulted in

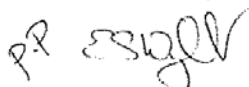


the Department being able to expedite your appointment to 16 May 2018. I understand that during this conversation [REDACTED] explained that the ENT Department was having some capacity issues which may have caused the delays you experienced.

Currently, there are two ENT Consultant vacancies which have been recruited to but these Consultants are currently not in post. Without these posts the waiting times are considerably longer than desired, with an average 6 month wait for a first Outpatient appointment. It is hoped that this situation will improve once the two new Consultants are in post. [REDACTED] would also like to highlight that where possible additional clinics are scheduled on the weekend to help reduce waiting times.

Once again, I would like to apologise for your experience and give you my assurance that we have taken your concerns seriously. I hope your ENT consultation went well on 16 May 2018 and if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED] Complaint Coordinator on 01865 572427 or by email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Sam Foster  
Chief Nurse