

Discharge Policy for Non-Attendance at Appointments 1.26

Document Control	
Version Number	2
Author	AK
Date	March 2025
Last Revised	June 2026
Updated	
Date to be review	June 2027

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Changes
1	Adam Kennaugh	March 2025	First draft
2	Adam Kennaugh	June 2026	Combined with policy for cancellation of appointments.

Introduction

iSIGHT Clinics are committed to providing the highest standard of ophthalmic care to all its patients. To ensure the efficient use of resources and timely access to care for all patients, it is essential to address the issue of non-attendance at scheduled appointments. This policy outlines the procedures for discharging patients who fail to attend their appointments without prior notice.

Policy Objective

The objective of this policy is to:

- Minimise the negative impact of missed appointments on the clinic's operations and other patients.
- Ensure fair and consistent handling of non-attendance cases.
- Provide clear guidelines to patients regarding the consequences of failing to attend appointments.

Scope

This policy applies to all patients scheduled for **ALL** appointments at iSight Clinics, including consultations, follow-up visits, diagnostic tests, surgical procedures, and treatment sessions.

Definition of Non-Attendance

Non-attendance is defined as a patient failing to attend a scheduled appointment without cancellation or rescheduling at least 48 hours in advance.

New referral DNA - Assessment of Referral

If a patient does not attend a new patient appointment/referral episode, a copy of the referral must be sent to a senior member of the clinical team. Upon receiving a referral, a senior clinical team member will assess it to ensure that the condition is not sight threatening. This step is crucial to prioritise urgent cases and provide timely care to those in need.

Repeated Appointment Cancellations

Patients are expected to attend all scheduled appointments or provide adequate notice if they need to cancel or rearrange. Failure to attend or repeated cancellation of appointments can adversely affect continuity of care and reduce appointment availability for other patients. Patients who cancel more than one appointment during a course of treatment may have their case reviewed. Following appropriate communication and consideration of any exceptional circumstances, a patient who cancels a second appointment will be discharged from iSight and referred back to their referrer or primary care provider, where appropriate. Exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Procedures for Non-Attendance

- When a patient fails to attend their scheduled appointment without prior notice, the administrative staff will attempt to contact the patient within 24 hours to assess their reason for non-attendance. This contact will be recorded on EMIS, including if no contact is made, then a subsequent attempt at contact will be made, after which a letter will be sent to the referrer.
- If it is determined that the condition is not sight-threatening, a decision to discharge the patient from iSight's care will be made by a senior member of the clinical team. The patient will then be referred back to their General Practitioner (GP) or optician.

- A discharge letter will be sent to the patient, explaining the reasons for the discharge, and advising them to seek care from another provider or return to their referring NHS practitioner.
- A copy of the discharge letter will be sent to the patient's GP or the referring practitioner, e.g. Optometrist.
- If the condition is assessed as sight-threatening, the patient will be given the opportunity to reschedule the appointment. The contact attempt and assessment outcome will be recorded in the patient's medical record.

Exceptions and Special Considerations

Certain circumstances may warrant exceptions to the discharge policy:

- Patients with genuine emergencies or unavoidable circumstances (e.g. sickness) preventing attendance will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the patient co-ordinators with reference to the clinical staff if necessary.
- Patients with chronic illnesses or disabilities who may face difficulties in attending appointments should be given additional support and flexibility.
- Patients who communicate in advance regarding their inability to attend due to valid reasons will not be penalised, provided they reschedule in a timely manner.

Communication of Policy

- Patients will be informed of this policy at the time of their initial appointment by inclusion in their appointment letter, and through notices displayed in the clinics premises.
- Both Text message reminders that are sent to remind patients of their upcoming appointments will also reiterate this policy for non-attendance and provide details on how to rearrange their appointment. These text messages can be audited to ensure they have been received by the patient.
- Surgical patients will be called ONE WEEK before the date of their planned surgery to confirm their attendance if they have not already confirmed they will be coming for surgery. If no contact is made with the patient, then they will be removed from the surgical list and the appointment offered to another patient.
- The policy will be made available on the iSight website.

Review and Monitoring

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the iSight management team to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.
- Non-attendance rates and the outcomes of discharge decisions will be audited and monitored regularly at the operations meeting to identify any trends or areas for improvement, and the policy will be reviewed as necessary.

Conclusion

The discharge policy for non-attendance at iSight Clinics aims to ensure that all patients receive timely and efficient care while maintaining fairness and consistency. By addressing the issue of missed appointments, iSight Clinic can optimise its resources and continue to provide high-quality ophthalmic services to all its patients.