Date: 30/01/2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST FOI/013208 – Dummy appointments

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the below information about "dummy appointments".

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.

If there is any confusion about the term "dummy appointment" please do not hesitate to get in touch. 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?
NO

2. Please elaborate on the answer to question 1 to explain why, or why not.
If no appointment is available at the time of referral, the 'deferred ' referral will go onto the ASI work list which is then managed locally within the directorate teams.

3. If the answer to question 1 is no, has the Trust ever used a dummy appointment system in the past?
Dummy system is only used to review referrals

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?
N/A

5. If the answer to question 1 is yes, how are dummy appointments cancelled?
NA.

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?
NA

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.
NA

8. How many Appointment Slot Issues (ASI's) resulting from the NHS e-referral service has the Trust had in the past calendar year?
Jan to Dec 2016 = 18,738.
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).
No

10. Are "dummy appointments" included in your waiting list statistics submitted to NHS England?
We do not use dummy appointments.

11. Are patients who have generated ASI's included in your waiting times statistics submitted to NHS England?
Yes - clock starts date referral received.