



Reducing Missed Appointments in the Health Visiting Service

Project team: Sonia Hedegaard, Health Visiting Programme Manager, Frances Prangnell, IT Project Manager and Adam Wilder, Business Change Manager



Problem statement:

Missed appointments across the Health Visiting Service are consistently around 11 to 12 per cent against the trust target of 5 per cent. There is a potential negative impact on children through not being seen at their appointments and potentially missing out on early identification and intervention to maximise their school readiness. This wastes clinical capacity and puts additional pressure on the service, as these missed contacts still need to be completed to meet key performance indicators (KPIs). The project to address this issue began in Autumn 2022.

SMART aim/vision statement:

Early identification and intervention for children and families to maximise child school readiness and reduce financial and clinical capacity impacts of missed appointments.

Measures to track improvement/targets:

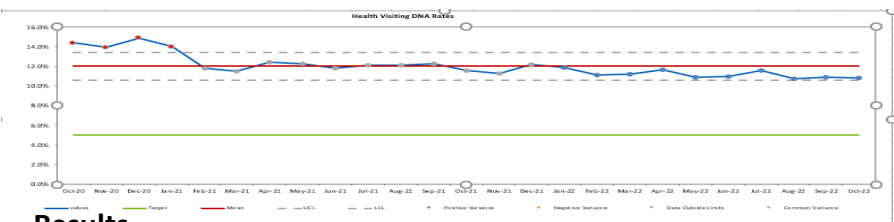
- The focus of the data reporting was on reducing missed appointments in the five mandated health and wellbeing review contacts.
- Statistical process control (SPC) charts on Power BI were the main means of tracking progress.
- Appointment cancellation traffic through the appointments email address was measured.
- Volume of calls to appointment line and abandoned rates on 8x8 were tracked.
- Accountability through district presentation of missed appointment data at Governance meetings.

Tests of change/programmes of work:

- 8x8 voicemails and lines were standardised across all districts to improve client experience of contacting the service and reporting. Improved reporting allowed for monitoring of call volumes, abandoned calls and voicemails.
- A single dedicated appointments email was introduced to make it as easy as possible for clients to change an appointment or notify the service they needed to cancel. Associated processes embedded with business team.
- A new section was added to Power BI showing SPC charts for missed appointments for the service and each district giving district managers the ability to view and monitor their data and act on local target areas.
- Meetings were held individually and collectively with district managers for engagement on the project and to identify possible interventions, for example, changing problem venues, moving visits to home, not making appointments too far ahead. District managers were empowered to make changes based on local needs and knowledge.
- Deeper analysis was undertaken with the two-year check, which was the contact with the highest missed appointment rate.
- Engagement was carried out with clients who had missed appointments to understand the reasons and what they felt would help address the issue.
- Staff engagement was carried out in focus groups to understand perceived reasons for missed appointments and solutions.
- Automated SMS 48 hour appointment reminders from our electronic patient record system RiO were implemented between March and May 2023.
- Accurate recording of missed versus cancelled appointments
- Deprivation quintile one and two clients were called to make a convenient appointment for their developmental reviews from June 2023.
- Project closure and handover to business as usual for ongoing monitoring through governance reporting.

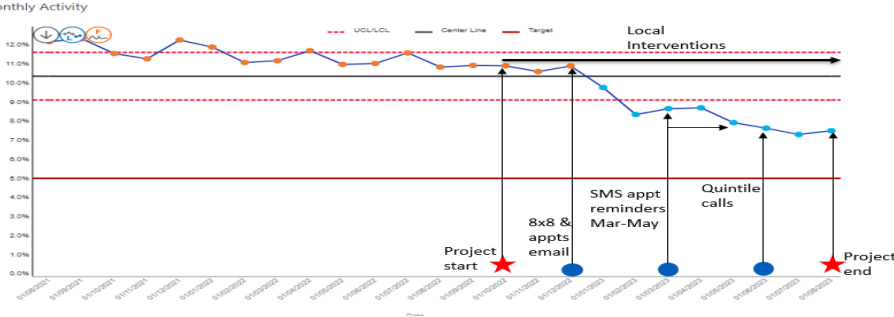
Data/ Baseline

October 2022 showed a steady DNA rate of between 11-12%.



Results

The decline in missed appointments during the project lifecycle are shown here, finishing at 7.5%.



Results, what we learned and what's next/Analysis:

Results: The service wide missed appointment rate has reduced from 11 per cent to 7.5 per cent during the project period. 11 per cent equates to 2,530 wasted contacts at a cost of around £220,110 per month. The reduction of 3.5 per cent is equivalent to £70,035 fewer appointments wasted and up to 805 more children being seen per month (assuming cancelled appointments can be filled). This project also incorporates addressing the trust objective to reduce the difference in do not attend (DNA)/was not brought (WNB) rates between most and least deprived areas and ethnic groups.

Learning: Stakeholder engagement early and throughout is key along with a whole team approach. Working out the cost for missed appointments had an impactful effect on senior management/ staff engagement with the project.

A service meeting its KPIs can hide the necessity to address missed appointments. There should be no blame, meetings are supportive opportunities to share what works. Ease of contacting the service, SMS reminders and calling to book all work well. An effective project team and not giving up when barriers and resistance are met are a must! Ongoing ownership of the work so it does not slip off the radar.

Future: Project has been handed over to business as usual to maintain and build on progress made so far.

