Out-patients: Attendance

Written Answer

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what safeguards are in place to ensure that patients who require review hospital appointments are seen within a clinically recommended or safe time.

Ben Gummer The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health

The appropriate interval for follow up appointments will vary between different services or specialties, and between individual patients, depending on the severity of their condition. All follow up appointments (also known as planned, surveillance or recall appointments) should take place when clinically appropriate.

NHS England's guidance, "Recording and reporting referral to treatment (RTT) waiting times for consultant-led elective care" is clear that when patients on planned lists are clinically ready for their care to commence and reach the date for their planned appointment, they should either receive that appointment or be transferred to an active waiting list, meaning a waiting time clock will be started and their wait reported in the relevant statistical return.

Furthermore, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) also assesses providers against the new fundamental standards of safety and quality below which care should never fail. One of the fundamental standards requires that care and treatment must be appropriate and reflect service users' needs and preferences. Another standard requires that care and treatment must be provided in a safe way. The CQC will require a provider to improve where it is not meeting these standards.

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