Media Release

Appointment reminder system aims to reduce missed appointments

A simple change to the outpatient appointment reminder service at the RUH aims to reduce the number of missed appointments at the hospital.

A reminder service is already in operation at the hospital and works by sending an automated message to the patient, reminding them of their upcoming appointment. However, the service is currently an opt-in service – which means that patients need to sign up to the service in order to receive reminders.

From Friday 1 August, the reminder system will switch to being an opt-out service, so patients will automatically receive reminder messages unless they choose to opt out.

Ben Peregrine, Deputy Divisional Manager for Surgery, said: "We respect a patient's right to choose whether or not they wish to receive reminder messages, so have made it as easy as possible for patients to opt out of the service. However, we are confident that most of our patients will appreciate receiving reminder messages

"Around 20,000 outpatient appointments were missed at the RUH last year. Missed appointments (known in the health service as Did Not Attends or 'DNA's) waste valuable NHS resources and can cause delays for those patients waiting. We are keen to do all we can to keep the number of DNAs at the RUH low. We see almost 400,000 patients in outpatient clinics each year. By making this an opt-out service we hope to remind as many of them as possible about their appointments."

Confidentiality of patient data is of utmost importance to the Trust and the contact details used by the appointment reminder service are those that are stored securely on our secure patient administration system.

Ben Peregrine adds: "There are a couple of things patients can do to help. Firstly, it's vital that your GP holds your most up-to-date contact details on file. If you have recently moved home or changed your phone number, get in touch with your GP and make sure they have your new details on the system. When we contact you, the contact details we use are those you have provided to your GP. Secondly, if you know that you no longer need your appointment – either because you feel better or because you realise you are unable to attend – please let us know."

To opt out of the Appointment Reminder Service, patients should call 01225 821821 or visit www.ruh.nhs.uk/optout. Patients will be asked to provide their name, date of birth, and NHS number (which can be found in the top right corner of the appointment letter) in order to be removed from the reminder service system. Patients can opt back in to the service at any time by calling the same number.

Ends