

## Improving together

# Reducing the number of missed outpatient appointments

There has been a concerted effort to tackle missed outpatient appointments using the Improving Together approach, resulting in up to 600 more patients attending each month.

Each missed outpatient appointment is estimated to cost the Trust an average of £165 in wasted clinic space, resources and time.

Missed appointments (known as Did Not Attends) are a problem across the NHS, but improvement work in Swindon is helping to make a big difference.

The proportion of missed appointments each month has historically hovered around 8 per cent, but continuous improvement work reduced this to 4.6 per cent in 2024.

The Improving Together approach is being used to explore the patient experience and internal processes.

A patient engagement event and face-to-face interviews with patients have provided the team a better understanding of the reasons patients do not attend, and talking to staff has given a fresh perspective on internal challenges.

A series of improvements are making it easier for patients to cancel or rearrange appointments. Letters, text messages and the DrDoctor App have been reviewed to ensure communication is timely, contact information is correct and preferred communication channels are recorded for each patient.

Internally, processes have also improved, with a new system to identify outpatients who are in hospital.

These are just some of the changes helping to improve the speed, accuracy and quality of patient communication, enabling clinic space, resources and time to be used more efficiently.

