



Request under Freedom of Information Act 2000

**Request Ref: NGFOI 18/19: 14**

Thank you for your request for information received at Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust (NGH) on 05/04/18 and forwarded to myself.

*I have been called by a third party ( ers connect ) regarding an upcoming appointment at NGH,  
After some time I was called again and the caller had personal details about myself and the upcoming appointment. I would like to know what details have been shared with this private company and by what agreement you have supplied said details.*

*I would like to know the full details passed to this private company and by whose authority these details were given.*

I am pleased to be able to provide you with the following information.

**Northampton General hospital procure a patient reminder service from an organisation called ERS Connect. That organisation provide SMS (Short Message Service) reminders and/or agent reminders to patients for the majority of outpatient appointments. ERS Connect are a contracted data processors on behalf of the Trust and in order to provide the reminder service the Trust sends them a daily list of patients that require reminders with the following details:**

**Name**

**Date of Birth**

**Ref** The unique reference no. from the hospital system

**Appointment Date & Time**

**Location** Northampton General Hospital or one of our satellite sites

**Specialty** For example - Cardiology, Haematology, Dermatology, Diabetes, Nephrology etc. This is used to provide specialty based reports to manage any cancellations and to identify the appropriate phone number for the patient to call if there are any issues

**Additional Info** We provide additional info such as a request to arrive 15 mins before the appointment time in order to have blood pressure taken etc.

The information is sent via a secure and encrypted route.

They provide reports of results of SMS and agent calls that include the following information, so that the appropriate clinical admin teams can action the changes and contact patients where necessary.

**Contact Type** SMS or Agent (Agent = a person who makes the call)

**Contact Attempts** 1/3

They attempt to contact up to 3 times before notifying us that there are issues

**Notes** For example "Patient has already cancelled appointment"

**Action** For example "Cancelled and rebooked"  
**Completed** Who completed the call if it was an agent  
**Date & time of contact**

10 days before an appointment a file is extracted for all clinic appointments that are not excluded clinic types, clinics that relate to sexual health, cancer, and other sensitive situations are excluded.

For all patients where a mobile phone number is recorded and the patient is under 70 and has not opted out of the service a reminder message is sent out via SMS/Text.

The reminders are in the following format:

- You have an appointment at Northampton Hospital on Fri 22 Aug at 10:30. Can you attend? Reply: YES or CANCEL or REBOOK or call 01234 56789
- Where a patient replies with "Confirm" an automatic response to be sent saying: "Thank you; no further action is required and your appointment has been confirmed"
- Where a patient replies with "Cancel" an automatic response to be sent saying: "Thank you; your appointment will be cancelled. Please note, if you cancel your appointment on 2 or more occasions you may be discharged back to your GP"
- Where a patient replies with "Rearrange" an automatic response to be sent saying: "Thank you; we will be in touch to rearrange your appointment"

If there is no response within 3 days then they receive a call from an agent, following up and asking the same questions.

For those people over 70, or with only a land line number recorded and have not opted out of the service then they will receive a call from an agent at day 10 and be offered the same options as above.

When a patient chooses Cancel or Rearrange then their details are added to a specialty based report providing details of the appointments that are now available to reuse.

Automated reminders have had a significant impact in reducing the number of patients not attending appointments, improving the hospital efficiency and helping the patient to get treatment as soon as possible by reducing missed appointments.

Would you like to opt out of the automated reminders service? If so please can you let us know and we will add you to the exclusion list.