

21 April 2023

Calls to Appointment Office on 3 April 2023

Under the terms of the Freedom of Information arrangements, regarding the Appointment Office on Tel: 028 9615 7100, I wish to know:

- 1. What was the actual volume (number) of calls to that number around 11 am - noon on 3rd April?**

The Ophthalmology Appointment Centre received 154 calls during this period.

- 2. What was the deployment (number) of staff to respond to calls around 11 am to noon on 3rd April?**

The number of Ophthalmology Appointment call handlers is 12 staff members.

- 3. How many members of staff were actually on duty at that time to deal with calls?**

On 3 April 2023, there were 3 Ophthalmology Appointment call handlers taking calls during this time period (staff numbers were reduced at this time due to sick leave / maternity leave / vacancies and staff training).

- 4. How many calls were actually dealt with (responded to) at that time?**

The number of calls that were dealt with (responded to) at that time were 45 calls. The average length of each call was over 3 minutes.

- 5. How many of those on duty were working from home and how many were actually at their place of work?**

None of our Appointment staff work from home.

If 3rd April was a strike day involving the relevant staff referred to above:

- 1. Why did the letter sent to me dated 29th March not advise of the likely effects of strike action?**

Appointment letters are not revised to predict the outcome of Strike Action. Monday 3 April 2023 had intended to be a strike day; however, the strike had been suspended late afternoon on Friday 31 March 2023. On Monday morning, Appointment staff were also trying to contact patients to attend their appointments for the afternoon clinics, which may have been previously cancelled for that date.

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2. Why was the message on the telephone answering machine not amended to inform patients of the likely effects of the strike action?

The Appointment Centres will record a message on the telephone answering machine if staff are unavailable due to industrial action. However, as Monday 3 April was no longer a strike day the normal message was reinstated.

The message states that 'the Appointment Office is currently experiencing high volumes of calls' and asks the caller to 'please continue to hold as one of our booking agents will be with you shortly'.