

Young Adult Diabetes Team

Overview:

A YA diabetes clinic established at University Hospital Lewisham to prevent drop off in attendance and increased vulnerability to diabetes complications. However, initial data revealed a high mean DNA (Did Not Attend) rate of 48.05%. The service was notably under-resourced, lacking a psychologist, youth worker, or dietitian. This project implemented low-cost, person-centred interventions:

- Tailored appointment reminders: letters, texts, and calls at 7 & 2 days pre-appointment
- Telephone consultations for non-attenders
- Joint appointments with the transition CNS, Diabetes nurse, and consultant
- Non-judgemental, supportive clinic environment focused on the individual, not just diabetes (all staff trained in YP friendly approaches)
- DNA letters written directly to patients in a personalised and caring tone

Objectives:

To reduce the DNA rate by at least 50% (target $\leq 24\%$) and assess the impact on glycaemic outcomes (HbA1c levels).

Results:

Over a 3-year period (2021–2024), the mean DNA rate was reduced from 48.05% to 10.9%, exceeding the original target. In parallel, patients who attended at least two consecutive appointments showed a median HbA1c reduction of 13 mmol/mol ($n=80$). These improvements occurred without additional staffing or funding, utilising existing team resources more effectively. In addition, the HbA1C reduction was greatest in people who had HbA1C of >64 mmol/mol during transition from paediatrics.

“I would not be alive without the support from my diabetes team”

Learning: These results were achieved by focusing on personalised, relationship-focused approaches. By reorienting clinic culture to be more youth-centred and supportive, services can better engage this at-risk group without extra funding. Staff readjusted their work patterns such as consultant swapping patients to become YA lead; specific regular clinic only for young adults.

