

Letters style guide and phrase bank

Contents

Word and short phrase bank	2
Sentence bank.....	3
Formatting	4
Example letters.....	6
1. Query back to GP or referrer.....	6
2. We have accepted your referral	6
3. Please book an appointment	8
4. Here is your appointment date	10
5. You missed or cancelled an appointment.....	11
6. We changed your appointment	13
7. We have discharged you from the service	14

Word and short phrase bank

For	Use
make or arrange	book
telephone	phone
unavailable	not available
rejected or refused	declined or 'sent back to your GP'
may	will
want appointment	need appointment
make a referral	put in a referral
back to the care of your GP	back to your GP
you cancelled	you have cancelled

Sentence bank

Common or useful sentences

Please contact us within 2 weeks of the date of this letter to book an appointment. Or let us know if you no longer need one.

If we do not hear from you within 2 weeks of the date of this letter, we will assume that you no longer need an appointment. We will discharge you back to your GP.

If you need another appointment after this, your GP will need to put in a new referral to us.

Please contact your GP if you have any worries about the problems you have been referred for.

Discharged from dermatology.

We have not heard from you, so we have discharged you back to the care of your GP. We will not offer any more appointments.

You have cancelled your dermatology appointment X times. Because of this, we have now discharged you back to your GP. We will not offer you any more appointments.

If you need another appointment, please contact your GP. They will need to put in a new referral to us.

Formatting

Use of bold

- Bold telephone numbers
- First use of child's name in bold, not bolded after that.
- No bold for the rest of the patient details
- Bold the subject line

Example

Please contact us within 2 weeks of the date of this letter to book an appointment. Or let us know if you no longer need one.

Phone: 0191 519 5850

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4pm

If we do not hear from you within 2 weeks of the date of this letter, we will assume that you no longer need an appointment. We will discharge you back to your GP.

Date of this letter

If the letter includes a date and refers to 'the date of this letter' in the body of the text. Format it with a colon.

Example

Date of this letter: Friday 18 October 2024

Phone and opening times

Phone not telephone. Except in the phrase "telephone appointment"

The number and the word phone bolded. Opening hours underneath with the days and then the times.

Example

Phone: 0191 519 5850

Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm

Patient details

Do not write the patient details on the same line. Split name, DOB, Age and NHS Number up onto separate lines. Only bold the name if the patient is a child, see below.

Example

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: ([PAT AGE])

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

Don't put patient details in the subject line for information governance reasons.

Subject Lines

Bold the subject line.

If possible make the subject line the action which the letter wants you to complete.

No full stop on the end of subject lines.

Example letters

We found when working on our pilot that the best way to work through a department's letters was by dividing them into groups. This way, one person could take all the letters in each group. They could match in their wording and house style.

The types of letters we have found so far are:

1. Query back to GP or referrer
2. We have accepted your referral
3. Please book an appointment (this includes reminders to book your appointment)
4. Here is your appointment date
5. You missed or cancelled your appointment
6. We changed or cancelled your appointment
7. We have discharged you from the service

1. Query back to GP or referrer

While these letters are directed to a medical professional, often the patient is copied in. This means the letter should be in language anyone can understand.

All of these are very different but there are some basic principles. For example, we use the word "declined" instead of "rejected" as in: "declined your referral".

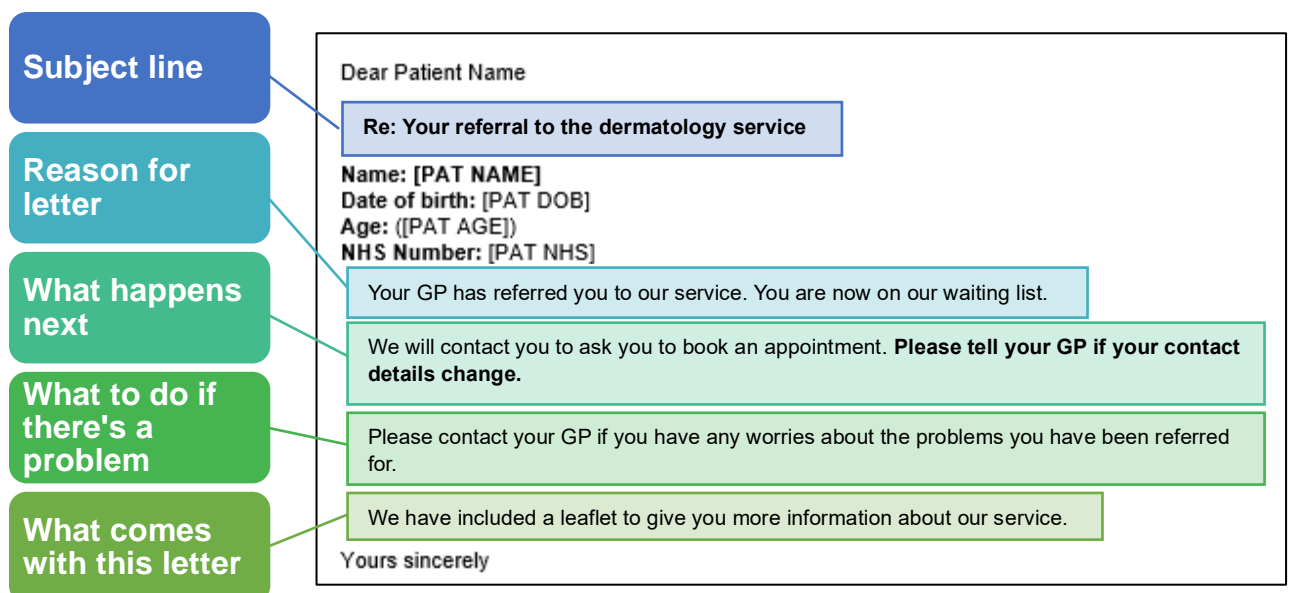
Where possible, include reasons why it has been rejected.

2. We have accepted your referral

This letter lets the patient know they are accepted onto the service. It may also let them know if they are on a waiting list.

Building blocks

What makes up this type of letter?



Adult example – DERM0017

Dear Patient Name

Re: Your referral to the Dermatology service

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: ([PAT AGE])

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

Your GP has referred you to our service. You are now on our waiting list.

We will contact you to ask you to book an appointment. **Please tell your GP if your contact details change.**

Please contact your GP if you have any worries about the problems you have been referred for.

We have included a leaflet to give you more information about our service.

Yours sincerely

Child example – DERM0029

Dear Patient Name

Re: Your referral to the Dermatology service

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: ([PAT AGE])

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

[PAT NAME]'s GP has referred them to our service. They are now on our waiting list.

We will contact you to ask you to book an appointment. **Please tell your GP if your contact details change.**

Please contact your GP if you have any worries about the problems [PAT NAME] has been referred for.

We have included a leaflet to give you more information about our service.

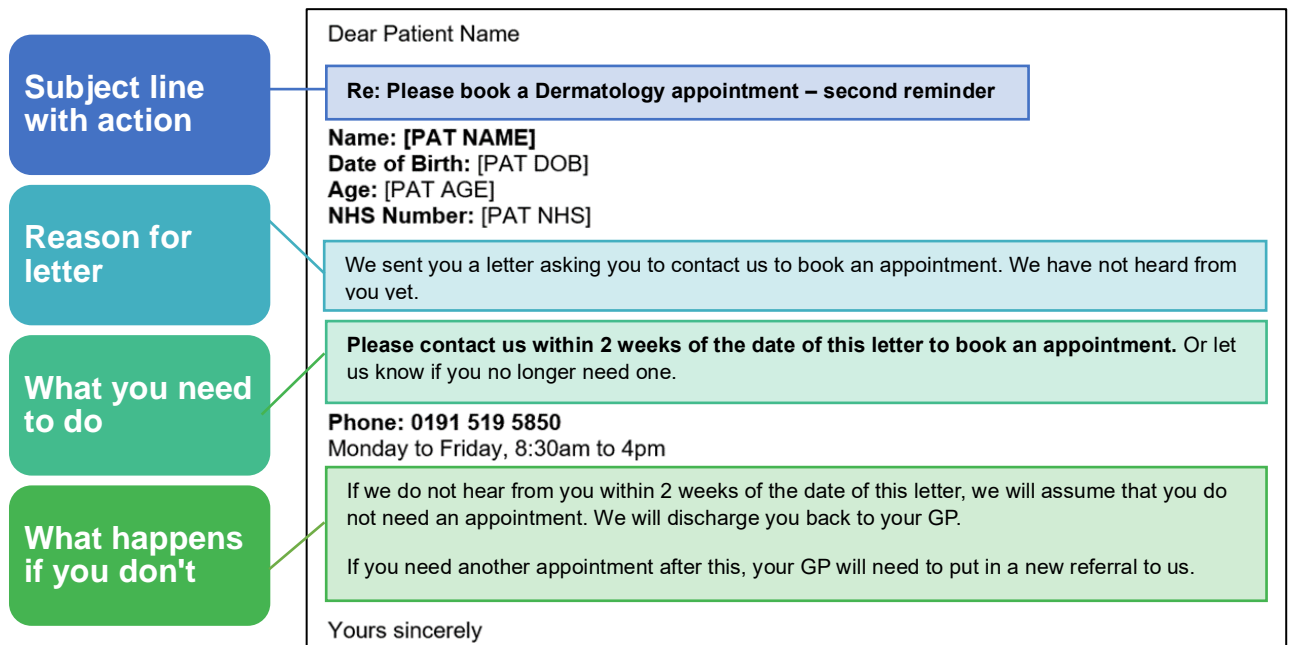
Yours sincerely

3. Please book an appointment

This letter invites patients to opt in and book an appointment. It also includes reminder letters.

Building blocks

What makes up this type of letter?



Adult example – DERM0023

Dear Patient Name

Re: Please book a Dermatology appointment

Name: [PAT NAME]
Date of birth: [PAT DOB]
Age: ([PAT AGE])
NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

You are receiving care from the dermatology service. You are due a review appointment.

Please contact us to book an appointment within 2 weeks of the date of this letter. Or, let us know if you no longer need treatment.

Phone: 0191 519 5850
Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:15pm

If we do not hear from you within 2 weeks of the date of this letter, we will assume you do not need an appointment. We will not offer you any more appointments.

Yours sincerely

Child example – DERM0006

Dear Parent or Guardian

Re: Please book a Dermatology appointment

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: ([PAT AGE])

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

[PAT NAME] is receiving care from the dermatology service. They are due a review appointment.

Please contact us to book an appointment within 2 weeks of the date of this letter. Or, let us know if [PAT NAME] no longer needs treatment.

Phone: 0191 519 5850

Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm

If we do not hear from you within 2 weeks of the date of this letter, we will assume [PAT NAME] does not need an appointment.

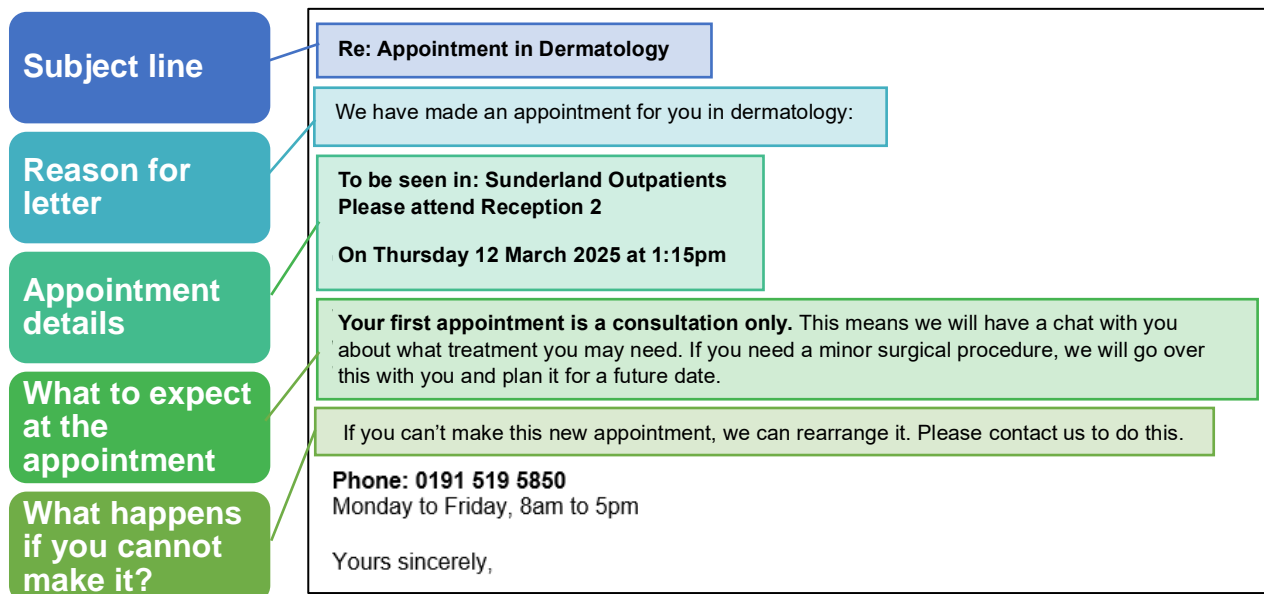
Yours sincerely

4. Here is your appointment date

This letter invites patients to an appointment

Building blocks

What makes up this type of letter?



Adult example – DERM0037

Please note: this is a telephone appointment

Date of this letter: Wednesday 5 June 2024

Mr Michael Mouse
Aspen Grove
Newcastle
Tyne And Wear
NE16 6QP

Dear Mr Mouse

Re: Phone call appointment with Dermatology

You have a telephone appointment on _____ at _____

Please do not come to the dermatology clinic at this time.

If you are not available at this time please contact us. We will arrange another appointment.

Phone: 0191 519 5850
Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm

Yours sincerely,

Child example – DERM0042

Dear Parent or Guardian

Re: Appointment in Dermatology

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of Birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: [PAT AGE]

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

We have made an appointment for [PAT NAME] in dermatology:

To be seen in:

Please attend

On at

If you can't make this new appointment we can rearrange it. Please contact us to do this.

Phone: 0191 519 5850

Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm

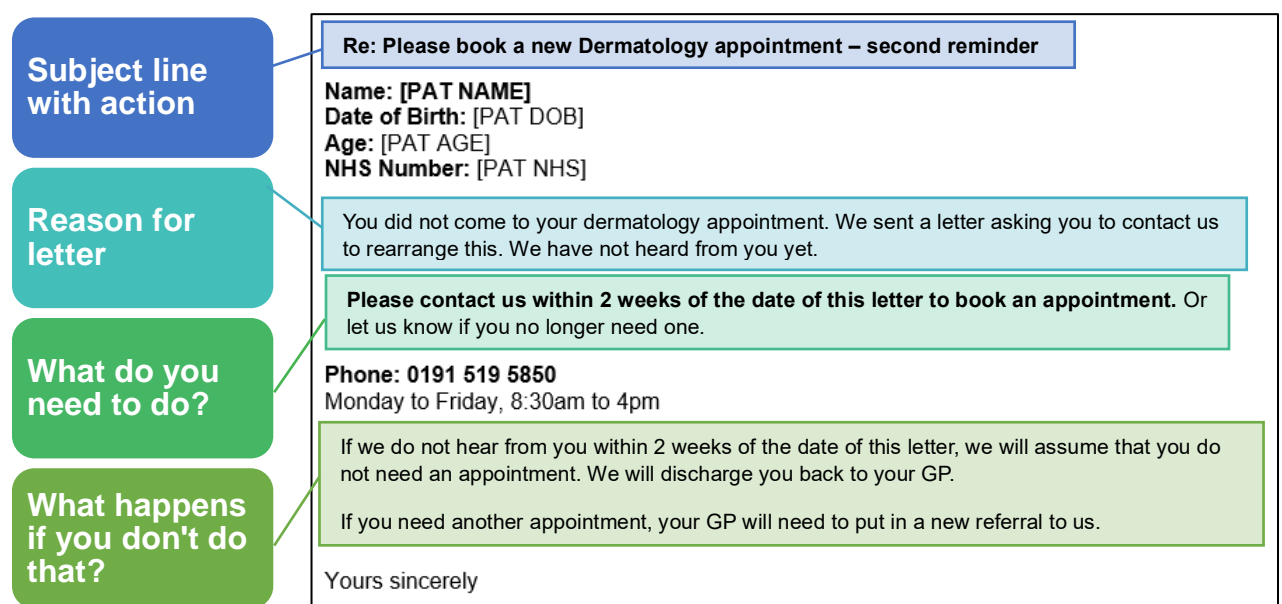
Yours sincerely,

5. You missed or cancelled an appointment

This type of letter encourages patients to rebook their appointment after having missed or cancelled their initial appointment.

Building blocks

What makes up this type of letter?



Adult example – DERM0020

Dear Patient Name

Re: Please book a new dermatology appointment – first reminder

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of Birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: [PAT AGE]

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

You recently missed your dermatology appointment.

Please contact us within 2 weeks of the date of this letter to book an appointment. Or let us know if you no longer need one.

Phone: 0191 519 5850

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4pm

Yours sincerely

Child example – DERM0043

Dear Parent or Guardian

Re: Please rebook Dermatology appointment

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of Birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: [PAT AGE]

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

You have cancelled [PAT NAME]'s dermatology appointment.

If [PAT NAME] needs another appointment, please contact us within 2 weeks of the date of this letter.

Phone: 0191 519 5850

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4pm

If we do not hear from you within 2 weeks of the date of this letter, we will assume that [PAT NAME] does not need an appointment. We will discharge them back to their GP.

If [PAT NAME] needs another appointment after this, their GP will need to put in a new referral to us.

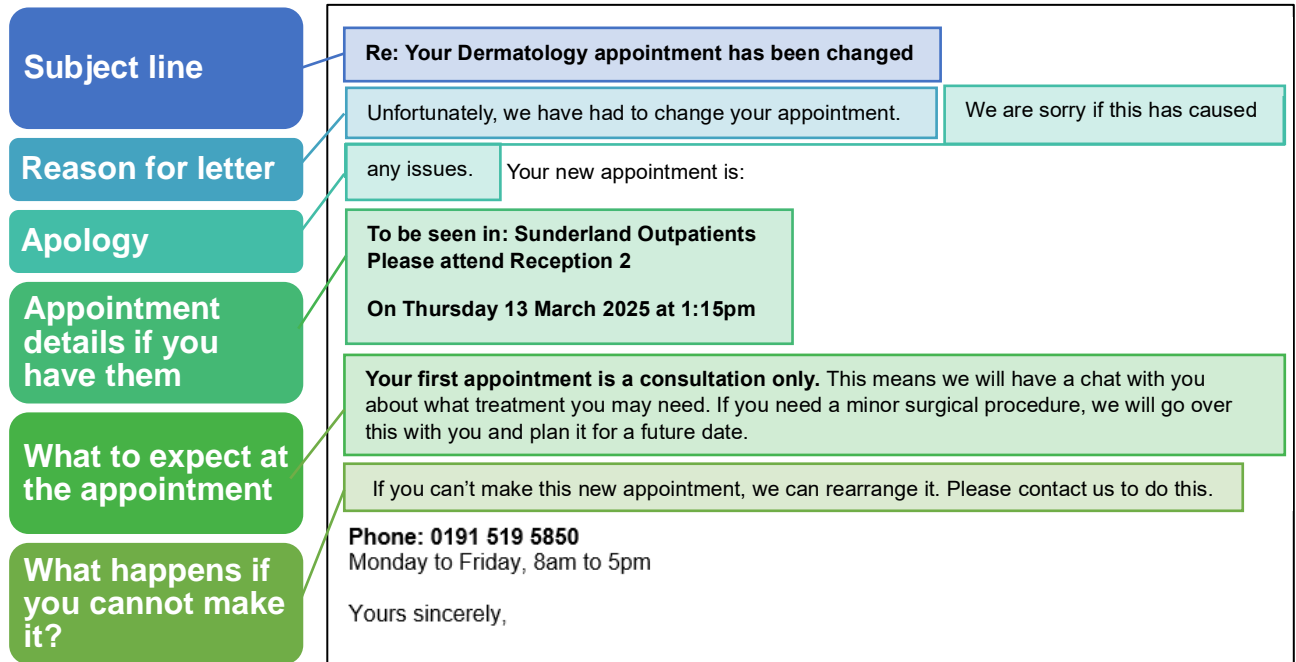
Yours sincerely

6. We changed your appointment

This is the type of letter you would send out if you needed to change or cancel the patient's appointment.

Building blocks

What makes up this type of letter?



Adult example – DERM0031

Dear Patient Name

Re: Your Dermatology appointment has been cancelled

Unfortunately, we have had to cancel your appointment. We are sorry if this has caused any issues.

You are back on our waiting list. We will send you an appointment as soon as one is available.

Yours sincerely,

Child example – DERM0040

Dear Parent or Guardian

Re: Dermatology appointment rebooked

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of Birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: [PAT AGE]

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

We have cancelled [PAT NAME]'s appointment after you told us you couldn't make it. We have rebooked the appointment. The new appointment is:

To be seen in:

Please attend

On at

If you can't make this new appointment we can rearrange it. Please contact us to do this.

Phone: 0191 519 5850

Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm

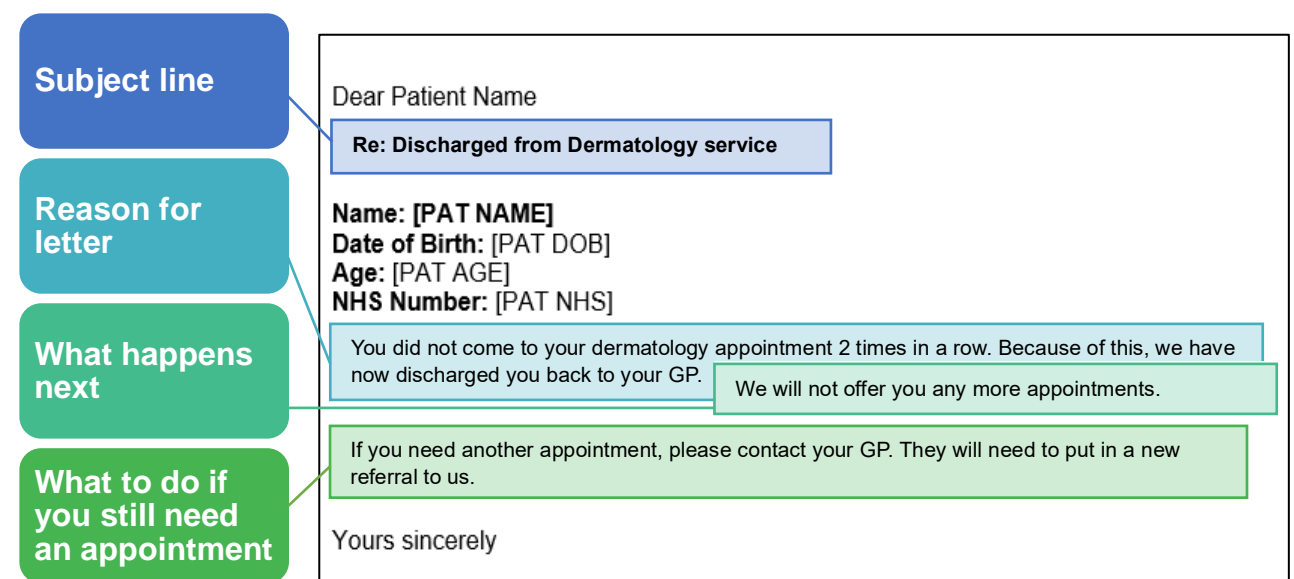
Yours sincerely,

7. We have discharged you from the service

This letter lets the patient know they are discharged from the service. It may also let them know why.

Building blocks

What makes up this type of letter?



Adult example – DERM0027

Dear Patient Name

Re: Discharged from Dermatology service

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of Birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: [PAT AGE]

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

You have cancelled your dermatology appointment X times. Because of this, we have now discharged you back to your GP. We will not offer you any more appointments.

If you need another appointment, please contact your GP. They will need to put in a new referral to us.

Yours sincerely

Child example – DERM0007

Dear Parent or Guardian

Re: Discharged from Dermatology service

Name: [PAT NAME]

Date of birth: [PAT DOB]

Age: ([PAT AGE])

NHS Number: [PAT NHS]

We have contacted you 2 times asking you to book a review appointment for [PAT NAME].

We have not heard from you, so we have discharged [PAT NAME] back to their GP.

If [PAT NAME] needs another appointment, please contact their GP. They will need to put in a new referral to us.

Yours sincerely