

Postbag

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Chaotic system will stop people donating blood

I HAVE just read the letter from Pete Waterman (*Postbag, January 2*) calling for people to donate blood and I fully commend him for that.

However, I would like to bring something to the attention of the National Blood Service - your recently introduced appointments system for donors is simply not working.

As a regular donor for the past 22 years, I have now missed donating at the last three sessions that I have been invited to attend. This is due solely to the 'new improved appointments system'.

I work doing home visits and cannot guarantee to attend at a specific time as my job can be unpredictable, that is why it is better to be able to just drop-in, as always used to be the case.

My husband is also a regular donor and has missed his last

two sessions, again because he often works away and cannot guarantee attendance at a specific time.

I was called to attend on January 2. I turned up at about 1.20pm for the session starting at 1.30pm. Several other donors arrived and we sat in the waiting area to be called.

At 1.30pm a member of staff called for people who had appointments for 1.30pm. Out of about 14 people, only two had made an appointment and off they went.

At 1.40pm they called people who had appointments for that time. No one had, so no one went through.

By this time more people had turned up to donate, only a couple of them with appointments and they went straight through.

By then, the waiting room had about 25 people in it, none

of whom had an appointment. I had been waiting for 30 minutes and when I asked when we might get called, the poor chap given the rotten task of processing 'drop-in donors', told us he really couldn't say, as those with appointments would be called first.

I couldn't stay any longer as I had to get back to work, as did six other people in the queue. We all handed in our paper work and left without giving blood.

As I left, there was a great commotion as other people wondered how long they would have to wait.

It seems to me that, yet again, the people who meddle with things that aren't broken in the name of improvement mess it all up. Donors are being forced into the appointment system, but this is not working.

Previously one simple system

existed - you turned up at a drop-in session, were given a number on arrival, you sat in an orderly queue, chatted to your fellow donors knowing you were doing something for the good of mankind, donated blood, had a biscuit and a cuppa and off you went.

Now it has been replaced by a mind-boggling appointments system and near anarchy in the queues. And that's an improvement?

Pete Waterman's wishes are well-intentioned, but I fear that many regular donors are actually going to be lost and once they have gone it is very hard to get them back.

National Blood Service, please scrap this appointment scheme and go back to the simple, drop-in, system that worked well for years. Saddened former blood donor of 22 years, Audenshaw