

# Did Not Attend (DNA) Policy

## Table of contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	Policy statement	2
1.2	Status	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	Overview	2
2.2	Recording DNAs	2
2.3	Preventative measures	3
2.4	Managing DNAs (face-to-face appointment)	3
2.5	Managing a failed home-visit encounter	3
2.6	Managing failed telephone encounters	4
2.7	Children who fail to attend	4
2.8	Actions needed for a Was Not Brought	5
	<b>Annex A – First letter to patient</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Annex B – Second letter to patient</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Annex C – Removal of a patient</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Annex D – Letter regarding child who was not brought</b>	<b>10</b>

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Policy statement

This document aims to guide the management of patients who miss their appointments. We must make the best use of the clinicians' time. This will ensure that all patients can access appointments within an acceptable time.

This document details the procedures for monitoring and recording. It also lists the actions needed to manage missed appointments at Binfield Road Surgery. Within general practice, failure to attend appointments is commonplace. It is therefore essential that an efficient management system is in place.

## 1.2 Status

The organisation will design and implement policies and procedures. They must meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce. None must be disadvantaged compared to others. This is in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Consideration has been given to the impact of this policy on the protected traits of those it applies to.

This document and its procedures are non-contractual. They may be changed or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment. This document applies to all employees and others working for the organisation, such as agency workers, locums, and contractors.

# 2 Policy

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## 2.1 Overview

A patient who misses an appointment without 24 hours' notice to the scheduled appointment or the need to cancel is referred to as a Did Not Attend (DNA) or Was Not Brought (WNB).

## 2.2 Recording DNAs

Record all DNAs on the clinical system in the individual's healthcare record. Use the following [SNOMED CT CODES](#):

- Did not attend – Reason given – 185326000.
- Did not attend – No reason given – 270426007.
- Did not attend – Appointment mix-up – 185329007.

This organisation will regularly review DNA statistics. It will present the findings at the relevant internal meetings.

The waiting area has a poster, linked on Teamnet, with DNA statistics.

The organisation records DNAs in the clinical system. It also logs them on the [DNA Logging Toolkit](#) and uses Apex.

## 2.3 Preventative measures

To reduce the number of DNAs, the organisation may offer:

- **Easy cancellation:** Patients can quickly cancel appointments. They can use a dedicated phone number, a text message service, or online cancellation.
- **Appointment reminders:** Patients are sent a text message to remind them about a forthcoming appointment. The reminder includes an explanation of how to cancel the appointment if it is no longer wanted.
- **Patient recording:** Patients must write their own appointment card for their next appointment. It should not be done for them. This encourages recall, thereby reducing subsequent DNAs.
- **Read back:** The administrative team will ask the patient to repeat the details of the appointment. This will check that they have remembered and recorded it correctly.
- **Patient engagement:** Discuss the issue with the Patient Participation Group (PPG). Highlight the numbers and plans for improving the DNA rates.
- **Patient information leaflet:** This will detail the policy for patients who fail to attend their appointments.

## 2.4 Managing DNAs (face-to-face appointment)

If a patient misses an appointment without notice, it will be recorded as: Did not attend – No reason given – SNOMED CT 270426007.

If a patient cancels an appointment, we will record it as: Did not attend – Reason given – SNOMED CT 185326000. This applies if less than 24 hours' notice is given.

It is unacceptable in most cases. However, there may be reasons for the patient's missed appointment. So, before sending any letter to a patient, we should discuss it with their clinician.

If there are no mitigating reasons, a letter will be sent to the patient explaining the DNA. It will use the template in [Annex A](#). If the patient misses a second appointment within 12 months, and there are no reasonable mitigating circumstances, a further letter will be sent using the template in [Annex B](#).

If the patient misses a third appointment in 12 months, the management team will decide whether to remove them from the organisation's list.

Before using the template in [Annex C](#) to write to the patient, the senior GP will assess if removing the patient from the organisation's list would harm their health or wellbeing. If the decision is made to remove the patient from the list, the organisation will consider this [BMA guidance](#).

Letters sent to patients are only valid for a 12-month period.

## 2.5 Managing a failed home-visit encounter

A failed visit is when there is no access to or contact with the patient at a planned or agreed visit. Detailed guidance can be found in the [Home Visit Policy](#).

## 2.6 Managing failed telephone encounters

Telephone consultation failed encounters must also be managed appropriately to ensure patient safety is not compromised.

If a patient fails to answer a pre-booked telephone consultation, the clinician initiating the call must code this as a "Failed encounter – no answer when rang back" using the SNOMED CT code 185337004.

The clinician should task a member of the reception or administrative team to contact the patient and rearrange the appointment. For accurate records, the clinician must note that they instructed the reception or administrative team to contact the patient to rearrange the appointment.

The receptionist or administrator must also log that they have telephoned the patient to rearrange their appointment. Use the SNOMED CT code 24671000000101 – "Telephone call to a patient."

If the patient fails to answer the call from the receptionist or administrator, this must also be recorded as a "Failed encounter – no answer when rang back" using the same SNOMED CT code as for the other failed encounters, as detailed above.

The organisation's messaging system must message the patient. It should ask them to contact the organisation. This must also be recorded in the patient's healthcare record.

When the patient contacts the organisation to rearrange, the receptionist or administrator is to ask why the patient failed to answer the pre-booked call. There are many feasible reasons for doing so; see examples below (this list is not exhaustive):

- Lost signal.
- Was on another call.
- Phone went straight to voicemail.
- Caller ID was blocked.

This will help the organisation find the cause of failed encounters. They can then advise all patients that the call will come from a withheld number. This will prevent future failed encounters.

If a patient requests a call-back from a clinician and they fail to answer, the same principle applies. However, the clinician should, at the next opportunity within that session, make a second attempt to call the patient.

At the end of the session, the clinician should make a third attempt to contact the patient. If the patient fails to answer the call three times, the clinician must code this as a "Failed Encounter - no answer when rang back" using the SNOMED CT code 185337004.

The clinician should then follow the steps in section 2.5. Task the reception or administrative teams as needed. When contact with the patient is made, they must be offered an appointment based on clinical need. If a receptionist or administrator

doubts the type of appointment needed (routine, urgent, same day, etc.), they should ask a clinician for advice.

## 2.7 Children who fail to attend

The [BJGP](#) explains that all missed appointments have been classified as a DNA. This group needs to be classified as Was Not Brought. It is not a child's responsibility to attend the appointment; it is their parents' or carers' duty to take them. Awareness must be given to this and the consideration that this could be termed as medical neglect.

For more information, see a video by [The Nottingham Safeguarding Children Board](#). It explains the differences between medical neglect and a simple DNA.

## 2.8 Actions needed for a Was Not Brought

It's a subtle difference. Coding non-attendance of children as "Child not brought to appointment" using the SNOMED CT code 901441000000108 may improve safeguarding audits. It would also emphasise the potential failure of those responsible for the child's welfare.

A child's non-attendance should not be classified as a DNA. This is because they lack the capacity and cannot attend by themselves.

### a. Actions following the first missed appointment:

- This organisation will send a further invitation to the patient.
- A letter will be sent to the parent or carer to ascertain the reasons behind the non-attendance. If appropriate, also forward a copy of the WHO leaflet titled '[If you choose not to vaccinate your child, understand the risks and responsibilities](#)'.
- We will note any response from the parent or guardian in the patient's clinical record. This includes any valid reason not to attend or to vaccinate.
- A template letter for a child who Was Not Brought is at [Annex D](#).

### b. Actions following the second missed appointment:

- The responsible clinician will contact the parent or guardian. They will do so either face-to-face or by phone. They will discuss the reasons for, and the importance of, the appointment or vaccination.
- Discuss the Was Not Brought letter. It could raise a safeguarding concern.
- Also, in cases of missed vaccinations, the WHO leaflet should be reiterated. It explains the importance of childhood immunisations.
- A second letter should be sent to the parents or guardians.

- Any response from the parent or guardian given face to face, by telephone or by letter will also be noted in the child's clinical record.
- c. Actions following the third missed appointment:
- If a child is uncontactable and/or unvaccinated after a third contact, this organisation will mark the record as either unable to contact or unvaccinated.
  - The clinician must discuss their concerns with the safeguarding lead. Despite attempts to recall the patient, the child is still unseen and unvaccinated.
  - A further letter is to be sent to the parent or guardian. It will advise them that, due to the persistent failure to bring their child, this has been referred to the safeguarding lead.
  - If any clinician has significant concerns, they must refer to child protection. Use the contact numbers below and those in the [Safeguarding Handbook](#).

A child's missed medical appointment will trigger a letter. It must be sent to the parent or carer to find out why they did not attend. Any response from the parent or guardian will also be noted in the patient's clinical record. All missed appointments should be flagged with the safeguarding lead.

## Annex A – First letter to patient

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Dear [insert patient name],

Our records show that you had an appointment booked with [insert clinician's name] on [insert day and date] but failed to attend this appointment. If you believe this to be incorrect, please contact us on [insert phone number] to discuss.

Appointments at [insert organisation name] are at a premium and this missed appointment could have been used by another patient if you had provided the practice with adequate notice that the appointment was no longer required.

During this last month, [insert number] appointments were recorded as "Did Not Attend" (DNA) which represents [add percentage] of appointments at [insert organisation name]. Please be advised that this organisation has a DNA policy which, for patients who repeatedly fail to attend, may result in them being removed from the organisation's list.

If you need to cancel or change an appointment, you can:

- Call the dedicated appointment line on [insert number]
- Email [insert email address]
- Text [insert text number]
- Cancel your appointment via our website [insert website]
- [Enter any other method]

Please help us to maximise appointment availability in the future. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

[Practice Manager]

## Annex B – Second letter to patient

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Dear [insert patient name],

Our records show that you had an appointment booked with [insert clinician's name] on [insert day and date] but failed to attend this appointment. If you believe this to be incorrect, please contact us on [insert phone number] to discuss.

We previously wrote to you on [insert day and date] regarding an appointment you had missed on [insert day and date]. This is the second occasion you have failed to attend a scheduled appointment within a 12-month period.

In our previous letter, we advised you that you can cancel or change an appointment by:

- Calling the dedicated appointment line on [insert number]
- Emailing [insert email address]
- Texting [insert text number]
- Cancel your appointment via our website [insert website]
- [Enter any other method]

If you fail to attend a third appointment within the same 12-month period, we will consider removing you from the organisation's list.

Please help us to maximise appointment availability in the future by contacting us as soon as you know you will be unable to attend your scheduled appointment. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

[Practice Manager]



## Annex C – Removal of a patient

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Dear [insert patient name],

Our records show that you had an appointment booked with [insert clinician's name] on [insert day and date] but failed to attend this appointment. If you believe this to be incorrect, please contact us on [insert phone number] to discuss.

We previously wrote to you on [insert day and date] regarding the appointments you missed on [insert day and date] and [insert day and date]. You have now missed three appointments within a 12-month period without justification.

Having discussed this with the Practice Manager, we have decided that we are removing you from our organisation's list. We notified NHS England on [insert date] of our decision and you will be removed on the eighth day following notification.

You are advised to register with another practice in the local area as soon as possible. A list of primary care organisations can be found at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) by entering your postcode in the "Find local services" section.

The decision to remove you from the list was not taken lightly but it is imperative that we provide an efficient service for all of our listed patients and we are unable to do so if a patient repeatedly fails to attend scheduled appointments.

The practice team wishes you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

[Senior GP]

## Annex D – Letter regarding child who was not brought

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[Reference - Insert patient name]

Dear [insert name],

Our records show that your child had an appointment booked with [insert clinician's name] on [insert day and date] but failed to attend this appointment. If you believe this to be incorrect, please contact us on [insert phone number] to discuss.

Appointments at [insert organisation name] are at a premium and this missed appointment could have been used by another patient if you had provided the practice with adequate notice that the appointment was no longer required.

[If the appointment was a missed vaccination insert the following:

Vaccination is the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and our children against ill health. They prevent up to three million deaths worldwide every year. Since vaccines were introduced in the UK, diseases like smallpox, polio and tetanus that used to kill or disable millions of people have either been eradicated or are seen very rarely. Other diseases like measles and diphtheria have been reduced by up to 99.9% since vaccines against them were introduced.

A child who lacks capacity needs to be brought to their clinical appointment by their parent or the person with clinical responsibility. Failure to bring a child to a medical appointment will always be classified as a "Was not brought" with a note being placed within the patient's medical record.

Please be advised that, should there be continued failures to bring a child to their medical appointment, we would consider this as potential neglect towards that child and, as a result, this practice would be obliged to advise the local safeguarding team of any concern that we may have.

If you need to cancel or change any appointment, you can:

- Call the dedicated appointment line on [insert number]
- Email [insert email address]
- Text back to your reminder message
- Cancel your appointment via My Health Online
- Cancel your appointment via our website [insert website]

Please help us to maximise appointment availability in the future. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert name and role]