

## DID NOT ATTEND (DNA) POLICY

**Policy Lead:** Practice Manager

**Policy aim:** To describe how the practice attempts to reduce the number of DNAs and how it deals with patients who repeatedly fail to attend appointments

### Introduction

This Practice invests a significant amount of time to create and maintain an appointments' system which will adequately manage the levels of supply and demand.

All factors including doctors training, annual leave and known times of 'higher demand' (e.g. after Bank Holidays and during the winter months) are taken into account.

We are committed to providing, as far as is reasonable and practical, appointments that meet the needs of our patients.

We cannot, however, replace appointment time lost when a patient fails to show up, or when they cancel their booking so late that the slot cannot be re-allocated.

DNA's have a significant impact on the services we provide within the Practice. It is not uncommon for patients who have DNA'd to then contact the Practice and request another appointment – placing further demands on staff resources and the appointments system.

They lead to frustration for both those patients waiting to get an appointment with a GP or Nurse and for those working in the Practice.

The practice's Patient Participation Group (PPG) reviews our DNA rates at the PPG meetings and are very concerned at the level of missed appointments and in particular at the number of patients who are repeat offenders

The PPG feel that a reduction in our rate of DNAs:

- Increases the availability of appointments for all patients
- Reduces the pressure placed on all the GPs, Nurses, Administration staff and the services offered by the Practice
- Reduces the waste of clinical time

The clinical system routinely records missed appointments in an individual patient's records as a 'Did Not Attend' event.

At the start of each month we run the search '*DNA Monthly search*' which is located in the Admin Officer's folder in the EMIS Web Reporting tool. This interrogates the appointments system records to identify those patients who have DNA'd on one or more occasions in the previous month and produces a report of non-attenders which is passed to the GP Partners and identifies those patient's who have DNA'd on 3 or more occasions and who have received a warning letter.

The list of non-attenders is reviewed by the partners. They exclude patients from the general policy where there are clinical reasons which need to be taken into consideration, eg., memory problems, recent hospital inpatient stay, safeguarding issues, etc.,

Thereafter, DNAs are treated as follows:

1. If there is a missed appointment in the previous month and less than 3 DNAs recorded in the last year no action required

2. If there is a missed appointment in the previous month and 2 other DNAs have been recorded in the last year the patient is sent a warning letter to inform them that their repeated failures to attend appointments are considered an abuse of the service and that any further missed appointment may result in us asking them to find an alternative GP.

The issue of the letter is coded in the patient's medical record using the Read code Zv68y – *'Other Specified Administrative Encounter'*

3. If a patient DNAs on another occasion within 12 months of the issued of the warning letter, the case will be discussed at the next partner's meeting.

The Partners will always consider reasonable appeals and valid reasons and if they decide there are exceptional circumstances, or it is in the best medical interests of the patient to remain on the practice list, a personalised letter is sent to the patient (or where applicable their carer) to address that patient's individual circumstances.

In all other cases a final letter is will be sent to the patient, at their registered address, to inform them that:

- persistent failure to adhere to this policy is evidence of a breakdown in the Patient/GP relationship.
- the Partners intend to proceed with removal of the patient's name from the Practice List
- they have a 28 days to find and register with another GP Practice for ongoing GP services.

We also inform Primary Care Support England (PCSE) via nhs.net email and enclose a copy of our letter for their records stating the reasons for deduction accompanied by a copy of the evidence.

## **Cancellations**

The GPs appreciate that there are a number of circumstances which can prevent a person from attending a pre-booked appointment but would urge patients to give the Practice adequate notice whenever this happens.

Ideally notice should be given at least 24 hours before the time of the booking. Cancellations notified within 30 minutes of the scheduled appointment will be deemed to be inadequate and will be counted as a DNA event for the purposes of this Policy. This is because it is difficult to fill a cancellation with less notice than this.

Cancellations can be made via the following systems:

1. in person – by calling at the reception desk, which is open, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 to 18:30 (19:30 on Mondays)
2. telephone – by contacting the Practice on 01744 621670
3. by responding to an appointment reminder text message with the word 'CANCEL'
4. via the on-line Patient Access system

Special circumstances may occur when, due to an extreme situation, little or no notice can be given. There may also be the odd occasion when someone just forgets an appointment.

In such instances it is a courtesy to telephone the practice at the earliest opportunity to explain the reasons and enable the Practice's records to be noted accordingly.

### **Consent**

If the appointment for an adult patient is being cancelled by phone, we are able to accept the cancellation if it is made by a named third party or the patient themselves. For reasons of confidentiality, we are unable to discuss any aspect of a patient's medical record, including their appointments, without their consent.

If the cancellation is in respect of a child (ie, a patient who is less than 18 years of age) we can only accept a cancellation from a person who has parental responsibility.

### **Child DNAs**

The reasons for failing to attend appointments or for disengaging with services are varied and may include transport difficulties, forgetfulness, or the perception that an appointment is no longer required. In a small number of cases, failure to attend/disengaging with services may raise serious concerns relating to Safeguarding Children. In order to promote safety and wellbeing of all children it is vital that failure to attend/disengaging is considered seriously and will be brought to the attention of the partners.

### **References**

Healthwatch report – *Best Practice for “did not attend” Policies in GP Practices*