



Woodbrook Medical Centre

Did Not Attend (DNA) Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding the management of patients who failed to attend their appointments. It is essential to make the best use of the clinicians' availability to ensure that all patients have access to appointments within an acceptable time frame.

1.2 Status

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment.

1.3 KLOE

The Care Quality Commission would expect any primary care organisation to have a policy to identify patients who fail to attend their appointments and in particular whether this has a safeguarding concerns, such as if it involves a child or vulnerable adult.

This policy and its procedures should be used as evidence of compliance against CQC Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE).¹ Specifically, Woodbrook Medical Centre will need to answer the CQC Key Questions on "Safe" and "Responsive"

The following is the CQC definition of Safe:

By safe, we mean people are protected from abuse and avoidable harm. *Abuse can be physical, sexual, mental or psychological, financial, neglect, institutional or discriminatory abuse.*

CQC KLOE S1	How do systems, processes and practices keep people safe and safeguarded from abuse?
S1.1	How are safety and safeguarding systems, processes and practices developed, implemented and communicated to staff?
S1.2	How do systems, processes and practices protect people from abuse, neglect, harassment and breaches of their dignity and respect? How are these monitored and improved?
S1.6	Are there arrangements to safeguard adults and children from abuse and neglect that reflect relevant legislation and local requirements?

	Do staff understand their responsibilities and adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures, including working in partnership with other agencies?
S1.7	Do staff identify adults and children at risk of, or suffering, significant harm? How do they work in partnership with other agencies to ensure they are helped, supported and protected?

The following is the CQC definition of Responsive:

By responsive, we mean that services meet people's needs.

CQC KLOE R3	Can people access care and treatment in a timely way?
R3.1	Do people have timely access to initial assessment, test results, diagnosis or treatment?
R3.2	Can people access care and treatment at a time to suit them?
R3.3	What action is taken to minimise the length of time people have to wait for care, treatment or advice?
R3.5	Are appointment systems easy to use and do they support people to access appointments?
R3.7	Do services run on time and are people kept informed about any disruption?
R3.8	How is technology used to support timely access to care and treatment? Is the technology (including telephone systems and online/digital services) easy to use?

1.4 Training and support

Woodbrook Medical Centre will provide guidance and support to help those to whom it applies to understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Additional support will be provided to managers and supervisors to enable them to deal more effectively with matters arising from this policy.

2 Scope

2.1 Who it applies to

This document applies to all employees of Woodbrook Medical Centre and other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation, such as Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) employees¹, agency workers, locums and contractors.

2.2 Why and how it applies to them

This document sets out the procedures for monitoring and recording and the required actions to be taken to effectively manage missed appointments at Woodbrook Medical Centre. Within general practice, failure to attend appointments is commonplace. It is therefore essential that an efficient management system is in place.

Woodbrook Medical Centre aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have with regard to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

3 Definition of terms

3.1 Did Not Attend

Failure to attend an appointment is commonly referred to as “Did Not Attend” or DNA. For the purpose of this policy, the acronym DNA will be used.

4 Policy

4.1 Statistical evidence

As well as being costly in financial terms, patients who fail to attend their agreed medical appointments often create excessive waiting times for other patients.

In 2016, Dr Robert Varham, the then Head of General Practice Development at NHS England, published his “*Releasing Time for Care: 10 High Impact Actions for General Practice*”² of which “Reducing DNA” featured as being one of the areas that was needed to improve productivity.

More recently, a BBC news article dated 2 January 2019³ stated that patients who miss GP appointments were currently costing NHS England £216 million a year with data showing that more than 15 million consultations were being wasted because patients failed to show up.

At Woodbrook Medical Centre, during any month, patients are recorded as being a DNA, meaning that the patient neither attended their appointment nor advised the practice within 24

¹ [Network DES Contract specification 2020/21](#)

² [NHS England: Releasing Time for Care - 10 High Impact Actions for General Practice](#)

³ www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46732626

hours prior to the scheduled appointment, to enable a cancellation or change to their appointment to be made.

The effects:

- An increase in waiting times for patients resulting in the risk of worsening patients' health
- A waste of Woodbrook Medical Centre's time – not simply the clinicians' time but also that of the administration team as the appointment invariably needs to be rebooked
- Cost to the wider NHS in the requirement of additional clinicians
- Potential of risk to a child who is reliant upon an adult to ensure that they attend their appointment

4.2 Recording DNAs

All DNAs are to be recorded on SystmOne in each patient's healthcare record with the following SNOMED CT⁴ code:

- Did not attend – 281399006 (Xa1kG)

The Practice Manager will review DNA statistics, presenting this information at the Practice Meetings. DNAs are to be displayed, highlighting the facts in the waiting room.

Statistically, signs that communicate the number of patients who did not attend in previous months, with signs that conveyed the much larger number of patients who did turn up, resulted in a 31.7% reduction in DNAs compared to the previous 12 months' average.⁵

4.3 DNA logging

In addition to recording DNA upon the clinical system, the organisation also logs all patients who fail to attend onto the [DNA Logging Toolkit](#).

Logging these failures to attend achieves the following:

- Monitors DNA and looks at trends
- Acts as a methodology should a patient complain that there is a lack of available appointments
- Provides a tool to promote any new initiative or preventative measures that have been established
- Promotes CQC compliance

4.4 Preventative measures

⁴ <https://termbrowser.nhs.uk>

⁵ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3308641

Almost every primary care organisation has done at least something to try to reduce DNAs. However, the evidence shows that it is usually necessary to do several things and that some of the common approaches need to be adjusted in order to be successful.

In order to reduce the number of DNAs, the organisation will offer:

- Easy cancellation

Rapid access is provided for patients who wish to contact the organisation to cancel an appointment.

- 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 are asked to write their own appointment card for their next appointment rather than having this 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 to them to check that they have remembered and recorded it correctly.

- Report attendances

The Practice Manager will publish DNA information and make it readily available in the waiting room.

- Patient engagement

Woodbrook Medical Centre will discuss the issue with the Patient Participation Group (PPG) to highlight the numbers and plans for improving the DNA rates.

4.5 Managing DNAs (face to face appointment)

Should a patient fail to attend their appointment, the clinical system will enter the fact that the appointment was missed and will record it as:

Did not attend – No reason given – SNOMED CODE: 281399006 (Xa1kG)

It should be noted that, whilst unacceptable in most cases, there may be extenuating circumstances as to why the patient failed to attend their appointment. Therefore, prior to any letter being sent to a patient, it would be reasonable to discuss this with their clinician.

Should there not be any mitigating reasons, then a letter explaining the DNA will be sent to the patient using the template at [Annex A](#). If the patient fails to attend a second appointment within a 12 month period, and should there be no reasonable mitigating circumstances, a further letter will be sent to the patient using the template at [Annex B](#).

Prior to writing to the patient using the template at [Annex C](#), the senior GP will assess whether removing the patient from the practice list would be detrimental to the patient's health or wellbeing and cause significant harm. Should the decision be made to remove the patient from Woodbrook Medical Centre.

Letters sent to patients are only valid for a 12-month period. These letters are to be saved in each patient's electronic health record. If it is determined that the patient is to be removed from Woodbrook Medical Centre, they will not be able to re-register with the practice for a 12-month period.

By reducing the number of DNAs, Woodbrook Medical Centre will:

- Enhance the efficiency of clinical sessions
- Reduce costs
- Increase productivity
- Offer a more effective service to patients
- Enable more effective booking of slots

4.6 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, it is the responsibility of the clinician initiating the call to 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 have the appointment rearranged. For the purpose of accurate record keeping, the clinician must document in the record that they have instructed the reception or administrative team to contact the patient in order to rearrange the appointment.

The receptionist or administrator must also document that they have telephoned the patient to rearrange their appointment using SNOMED CT code 2467100000101 –"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 encounter as detailed above.

When the patient contacts Woodbrook Medical Centre 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 voice mail
- Caller ID was blocked

By doing so, Woodbrook Medical Centre can determine the root cause of such failed encounters and take appropriate action, i.e., advise all patients that the call will be coming from a withheld number thereby preventing future failed encounters.

If a patient has requested a call back from a clinician and they fail to answer, the same principle applies although the clinician should, at the next available opportunity within that same 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. Should the patient fail to answer the call for the third time, the clinician is to read code this as a “Failed Encounter – no answer when rang back” using the SNOMED CT code 185337004.

The clinician should then follow the steps outlined at section 4.5, tasking the reception or administrative teams accordingly. When contact with the patient is made, they must be offered an appointment based on clinical need. Should a receptionist or administrator have any doubt as to the type of appointment needed (routine, urgent, same day etc.), they should seek advice from a clinician.

4.7 Children who fail to attend

Awareness is to be given to children who fail to attend an appointment.

Whilst all missed appointments have traditionally been classified as a “Did Not Attend”, this group actually needs to be classified as “Was Not Brought” as it is not a child’s responsibility to attend the appointment; it is the responsibility of their parents or carers to take them. As such, awareness must be given to this and the consideration that this could be termed as medical neglect.⁶

For further information, [The Nottingham Safeguarding Children Board](#) has developed a video to assist with understanding the differences between medical neglect and a simple DNA.

4.8 Actions needed for a “Was Not Brought”

Although it is a subtle difference, coding non-attendance of children as “Child not brought to appointment” using the SNOMED CT code 901441000000108 (Xab0Q) may be considered to enable more accurate safeguarding auditing in addition to emphasising the potential failure by those responsible for the child’s welfare.

⁶ [British Journal of General Practitioners](#)

Any non-attendance by a child to their medical appointment will trigger a letter that needs to be sent to the parent or carer to ascertain the reasons behind the non-attendance. 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.

Further information can be found in the [Safeguarding Policy](#). A letter for a child who "Was not brought" can be found at [Annex D](#).

For a child who misses a vaccination, refer to the [Childhood Vaccination and Immunisations Policy](#)

4.9 Organisation information

In order to remind patients of the significance of DNAs, templates for posters to display in the waiting room can be found at [Annex E](#).

4.10 Summary

Patients who fail to attend their medical appointments continue to have a significant financial impact across the NHS. Having a robust management system in place will help to reduce the number of DNAs at Woodbrook Medical Centre and ensure that all patients have improved access to an appointment within an acceptable time frame.

Annex A – First letter to patient

Dear [insert patient name]

We are aware that you did not attend your recent appointment on [date].

Our records show that the following appointments have not been attended over the last year:

- Details of previous DNAs

As I am sure you can appreciate, there is a large demand on appointments at the practice and these appointments could have been used by other patients if you had informed the practice that you no longer required to be seen. The practice has a policy on patients not attending appointments which in extreme cases can result in the patient being removed from our practice list.

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

- Telephone 01509 239166, or
- cancelling online – please see our website for further information on how to do this <https://www.woodbrookmedicalcentre.co.uk/pages/Appointments>

Please help us to utilise our appointments by cancelling any future appointments that you do not need.

If there was any reason why you did not attend, please contact us so we can discuss this further.

We look forward to seeing you at your future appointments.

Yours sincerely

Practice Manager
For and on behalf of Woodbrook Medical Centre

Annex B – Second letter to patient

Dear [insert patient name]

We are that you did not attend your recent GP appointment on [date].

Our records show that the following appointments have not been attended over the last year:

- Details of previous DNAs

As I am sure you can appreciate, there is a large demand on appointments at the practice and these appointments could have been used by other patients if you had informed the practice that you no longer required to be seen. The practice has a policy on patients not attending appointments which may result in the patient being removed from our practice list.

Please help us to best utilise our appointments by cancelling any future appointment immediately upon realising you do not need it or cannot attend the booked time.

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

- Telephone 01509 239166, or
- cancelling online – please see our website for further information on how to do this <https://www.woodbrookmedicalcentre.co.uk/pages/Appointments>

We previously wrote to you on [] as you had missed a previous appointment. Our records show that this is now the second occasion within the past 12 months that you have not attended an appointment and have not cancelled this appointment or given a valid reason for non-attendance.

This letter is to inform you that should you miss another appointment without cancellation, the practice may remove you from the practice list as this would be deemed a breakdown in the doctor patient relationship.

If you were unaware of this appointment or if there was any reason why you did not attend, please do contact us so we can discuss this further.

We look forward to seeing you at your future appointments.

Yours sincerely

Practice Manager
For and on behalf of Woodbrook Medical Centre

Annex C – Removal of a patient

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 [] 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 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

Dr B Noble

Dr B Noble
Senior GP
For and on behalf of Woodbrook Medical Centre

Annex D – Letter regarding child who was not brought

Dear [insert name]

Reference [Insert patient name], NHS Number [] Date of Birth []

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 01509 239166 to discuss.

Appointments at Woodbrook Medical Centre 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.

To understand the benefits of immunisations, please find [enclosed/link to] the World Health Organization leaflet titled: [If you choose not to vaccinate your child, understand the risks and responsibilities](#)]

Clinical appointments that have been booked for a child who lacks capacity need to be brought to the appointment by the parent or person with parental responsibility. Failure in bringing 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 is 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:

- Telephone 01509 239166, or
- cancelling online – please see our website for further information on how to do this <https://www.woodbrookmedicalcentre.co.uk/pages/Appointments>

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

Yours sincerely

Practice Manager

3 reasons **NOT** to miss your appointment



Help other patients

If you book an appointment but do not attend, another patient will miss out.

Reduce our workload

Failure to attend or to cancel an appointment increases administrative work.



Save the NHS money

According to Government data, a GP appointment costs up to £50. Missed appointments waste money that you have invested in the NHS.

How can you help?

Here are 3 simple ways you can help us to reduce the number of wasted appointments:

1. Encourage family members and friends to attend or cancel their appointment.
2. Write down your appointment and/or add to your phone calendar. Even better, set a reminder.
3. Always cancel unwanted appointments, no matter how late in the day.

Thank you for your co-operation, support and help.