**Did Not Attend (DNA) Policy**

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# Introduction

## Policy statement

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance regarding the management of patients who fail 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.

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

## Status

The organisation will aim 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 regarding the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time.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. Furthermore, this document applies to all employees of the organisation and other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

# Policy

## Overview

When a patient fails to attend an appointment or fails to notify this organisation 24 hours prior to the scheduled appointment of the need to cancel or change the appointment, it is referred to as a Did Not Attend (DNA) or Was Not Brought (WNB).

## Recording DNAs

All DNAs are to be recorded on the clinical system in the individual’s healthcare record with the following [SNOMED CT CODES](https://termbrowser.nhs.uk/?perspective=full&conceptId1=404684003&edition=uk-edition&release=v20201028&server=https://termbrowser.nhs.uk/sct-browser-api/snomed&langRefset=999001261000000100,999000691000001104):

* Did not attend – No reason given – 270426007
* Did not attend – No advance warning given – 1778011000006103
* Failed encounter – no answer when rang back – 185337004
* Adult not brought to appointment - 1323481000000100
* Child not brought to appointment - 901441000000108

This organisation will review DNA statistics and present this information at relevant internal meetings.

DNA statistical information is displayed in the waiting area, website and social media.

## Preventative measures

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

* **Easy cancellation**: Rapid access is provided for patients who wish/or are able to contact the organisation to cancel an appointment. [Voice Connect, NHS App/Patient Access, link in SMS Appointment Reminder]
* **Appointment reminders**: Patients with mobile numbers recorded are sent a text message to remind them about a forthcoming appointment. The reminder includes a link of how to cancel the appointment if it is no longer wanted.
* **Read back**: The administrative team will routinely repeat the details of the appointment to check that they have remembered and recorded it correctly.
* **Patient engagement**: Discuss the issue with the Patient Participation Group (PPG) to highlight the numbers and plans for improving the DNA rates.
* **Patient information leaflet**: Our DNA Policy is shared on our website. www.arbury.nhs.uk

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

Should a patient fail to attend their appointment without notice, this will be recorded as: Did not attend – No reason given – 270426007

Should a patient advise that they need to cancel an appointment, although less than 24 hours’ notice is given, this will be recorded as: Did not attend – No advance warning given – 1778011000006103

It should be noted that, while 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 form of communication 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 6 month period, and should there be no reasonable mitigating circumstances, a form of communication will be sent to the patient using the template at Annex B.

Should the patient then fail to attend a third appointment within the same 6 month period, a further form of communication will be sent to the patient using the template at Annex C, and a copy given to the Practice Manager, for the next management meeting, where a decision will be made by the management team as to whether the patient is to be removed from the organisation’s list upon a further failed to attend appointment.

Prior to writing to the patient using the template at Annex D, the senior GP will assess whether removing the patient from the organisation’s 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 the list, the organisation will consider this [BMA guidance](https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/managing-your-practice-list/removing-patients-from-your-practice-list).

Letters sent to patients are only valid for a rolling 6 month period.

## 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” – 185337004.

The patient must then be sent a message using the organisation’s messaging system asking them to contact the organisation. This must also be recorded in the patient’s healthcare record.

When the patient contacts the organisation to rearrange, where possible, the PSA or administrator is to ask why the patient failed to answer the previous 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, this organisation 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 another opportunity within that same session, make a second attempt to call the patient, not within 10 minutes of the first call.

Should the patient fail to answer the call for the second time, the clinician is to code this as a “Failed Encounter – no answer when rang back” –185337004.

## Vulnerable Adults who fail to attend

Arbury Medical Centre understands that this group needs to be classified as “Adult not brought to appointment” – 1323481000000100.

Vulnerable Adults include, but are not limited to,

* adults where being vulnerable is defined as in need of special care, support, or protection because of ages, disability, risk of abuse or neglect,
* those with learning difficulties and cognitive impairment, including those with dementia
* those with disabilities that rely on others.

Although it is a subtle difference, coding non-attendance of vulnerable adults as “Adult not brought to appointment” – 1323481000000100 may be considered to enable more accurate safeguarding auditing.

It should be noted that not having capacity, not being able to attend by themselves, a vulnerable adult non-attendance will still be treated as above, but the carer will be contacted via the steps mentioned above.

## Children who fail to attend

The BJGP explains that while all missed appointments have traditionally been classified as a DNA, this group 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. Awareness must be given to this and the consideration that this could be termed as medical neglect.

## Actions needed for a Was Not Brought - Vaccinations

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

It should be noted that not having capacity, nor being able to attend by themselves, a child non-attendance should not be classified as a DNA.

1. Actions following the first non-attendance for Vaccinations:

* This nursing team will attempt to call the patient’s parent or guardian to rebook the vaccination, if no answer, a task will be sent to the Admin team to send a letter to contact for rebooking using template letter for a child who Was Not Brought Annex E.

1. Following the second non-attendance for Vaccinations

* A letter will be sent to the parent or carer to ascertain the reasons behind the non-attendance. If appropriate, a copy of the WHO leaflet titled ‘[If you choose not to vaccinate your child, understand the risks and responsibilities](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/160753/If-you-choose_EN_WHO_WEB.pdf)’ is to also be forwarded
* If appropriate, any response from the parent or guardian will also be noted in the patient’s clinical record, including if there is a valid reason not to attend or to vaccinate
* A template letter for a child who Was Not Brought is at Annex E

1. Actions following the third non-attendance for vaccinations:

* The responsible clinician will contact the parent or guardian (either face to face or via telephone) to discuss the reasons and the importance of the appointment or vaccination
* The contents of the Was Not Brought letter should be discussed, reiterating that this could be considered as a safeguarding concern
* Additionally, in cases of missed vaccinations, the contents of the WHO leaflet should be reiterated, explaining the importance of childhood immunisations
* Clinician to make Home Visit and Pre-School Team aware that child is outstanding immunisations.
* Dependent on parent/guardian response, the clinician noting that the child remains unseen or unvaccinated despite all attempts to recall the patient is to discuss their concerns with the safeguarding lead at next GP meeting
* Where appropriate, a further letter is to be forwarded to the parent or guardian advising them that, due to the persistent failure to bring their child, this has been referred to the safeguarding lead
* Should any clinician have significant concerns, they are to initiate a child protection referral using the contact numbers as below and as detailed within the Safeguarding Policy

## Actions of “Was not brought” (External Appointments)

In the event of any DNA correspondence of hospital medical appointments or mental health appointments received, that states non-attendance and that patient is now discharged (i.e patient needs re-referral to access services). The relevant SNOMED codes will be recorded in the patients individual healthcare record:

* “Child not brought to appointment” – 901441000000108

Any non-attendance by a child to their hospital 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. If required, such non-attendance will be discussed at the next GP meeting as they arise.

Template for Was Not Brought letter (external appointments) Annex F

# Annex A – First communication to patient

**If patient has mobile number / email address on record – the following will be sent:**

We're sorry you missed your appointment on XX.XX.XX.

There are various ways to cancel your appointment if no longer needed:

• NHS App or Patient Access

• The link on reminders sent via SMS

• Calling the surgery

• Email cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net – subject heading of “Appointment Cancellation” marked as High Priority.

• Admin Request at https://arbury-consult.uk.rapidhealth.co.uk/#/

Our DNA Policy is available on our website www.arbury.nhs.uk.

**If no mobile number/email address on record – the following will be sent via letter:**

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 to discuss.

Appointments at Arbury 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.

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.

Appointments can be cancelled:

* Via the NHS App or Patient Access
* Via the link on face-to-face reminders sent via SMS
* Calling the surgery
* Email [cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net](mailto:cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net) – with the subject heading of “Appointment Cancellation” and marked as High Priority
* Via our the “Contact Us Online” section of our website [www.arbury.nhs.uk](http://www.arbury.nhs.uk)

Please ensure your contact details are up to date with the practice and help us to maximise appointment availability in the future. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

# Annex B – Second Communication to 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.

Appointments at Arbury 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.

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 and/or online appointment access being removed without notice.

If you need to cancel an appointment, you can:

* Via the NHS App or Patient Access
* Via the link on face-to-face reminders sent via SMS
* Calling the surgery
* Email [cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net](mailto:cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net) – with the subject heading of “Appointment Cancellation” and marked as High Priority
* Via our the “Contact Us Online” section of our website [www.arbury.nhs.uk](http://www.arbury.nhs.uk)

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

Yours sincerely,

Practice Manager

# Annex C – Third Communication to 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 communicated to you on [insert day and date] regarding an appointment you had missed on [insert day and date] and wrote to you on [insert day and date] regarding an appointment you had missed on [insert day and date]. This is the third occasion you have failed to attend a scheduled appointment within a 6 month period.

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

* Email [cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net](mailto:cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net) – with the subject heading of “Appointment Cancellation” and marked as High Priority
* Via the NHS App or Patient Access
* Via our the “Contact Us Online” section of our website [www.arbury.nhs.uk](http://www.arbury.nhs.uk)
* Via the link on face-to-face reminders sent via SMS

If you fail to attend another appointment within the same 6 month period, we will consider removing you from the organisation’s list and/or cancelling your online appointment access without notice.

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 D – 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 three appointments within a 6 month period without justification.

Having discussed this with the GP Partners, it has been 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,

Practice Manager

# Annex E – Letter regarding child who was not brought

[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 Arbury 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.

A child who lacks capacity needs to be brought to their clinical appointment by their parent or the person with parental 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 and/or Health Visiting Team of any concern that we may have.

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

* Call the surgery on 02476 388 555
* Email [cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net](mailto:cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net) – with the subject heading of “Appointment Cancellation” and marked as High Priority
* Via the NHS App or Patient Access
* Via the link on face-to-face reminders sent via SMS

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

Yours sincerely,

Practice Manager

# Annex F – Letter regarding child who was not brought to hospital or mental health appointment

[Reference - Insert patient name]

Dear [insert name],

Our records show that your child had an appointment booked with [insert hospital/mental health service] on [insert day and date] but failed to attend this appointment. If you believe this to be incorrect, or your appointment has been missed for some reason, please contact the service provider immediately on [insert their telephone number] to discuss.

Appointments within the NHS 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.

A child who lacks capacity needs to be brought to their appointment by their parent or the person with parental 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 patients medical record.

If the service provider has now removed you from their appointment waiting list we will need to re-refer your child into the service if the original medical reason for referral has not resolved. If this has occurred, you will need to telephone (02476 388 555) or email ([cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net](mailto:cwicb.arburyadmin@nhs.net)) the surgery to request a clinician to re-refer your child. Please note, that if there is a significant time delay between the original referral and the service provider appointment, the clinician may refuse to re-refer until they have re-examined/discussed your child’s health once again. This may require a clinician appointment at the surgery.

Please help us to maximise appointments within all sectors of the NHS. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Practice Manager