



## DNA (Did Not Attend) 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 Ridgeway View Family Practice. Within general practice, failure to attend appointments is commonplace. It is therefore essential that an efficient management system is in place.

Ridgeway View Family Practice 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This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time.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 Ridgeway View Family Practice and other individuals performing functions in relation to Ridgeway View Family Practice such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

## **POLICY**

### **Overview**

When a patient fails to attend an appointment or fails to notify Ridgeway View Family Practice 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).

### Recording DNAs

All DNAs are to be recorded on the clinical system in the individual's healthcare record with 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

Ridgeway View Family Practice will review DNA statistics on a regular basis, presenting this information at the relevant internal meetings. DNA statistical information is displayed in the waiting area on the patient information screen, on our website and on our social media platforms.

### **Preventative measures**

In order to reduce the number of DNAs, Ridgeway View Family Practice may offer:

**Easy cancellation:** Rapid access is provided for patients who wish to contact Ridgeway View Family Practice to cancel an appointment, such as a dedicated phone number, a text message service and online cancellation functionality.

**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.

**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.

**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:** This will detail the policy for dealing with patients who fail to attend their appointments.

### **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 – SNOMED CT 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 – Reason given – SNOMED CT 185326000

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 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](#).

Should the patient then fail to attend a third appointment within the same 12-month period, a decision will be made by the management team as to whether the patient is to be removed from Ridgeway View Family Practice's list. Prior to writing to the patient using the template at [Annex C](#), a Partner will assess whether removing the patient from Ridgeway View Family Practice's list would be detrimental to the patient's health or wellbeing and cause significant harm.

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

### **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.

### **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:

“Failed encounter – no answer when rang back” - SNOMED CT 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 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. The patient must then be sent a message using Ridgeway View Family Practice's messaging system asking them to contact Ridgeway View Family Practice. This must also be recorded in the patient's healthcare record. When the patient contacts Ridgeway View Family Practice 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

By doing so, Ridgeway View Family Practice 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 code this as a “Failed Encounter – no answer when rang back” using SNOMED CT 185337004.

The clinician should then follow the steps outlined previously, 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.

### **Children who fail to attend**

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**

Although it is a subtle difference, coding non-attendance of children as “Child not brought to appointment” using SNOMED CT 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.

Actions following the first missed appointment:

Ridgeway View Family Practice will send a further invitation to the patient and a letter (Annex D) 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’ is also be forwarded.

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

Actions following the second missed appointment:

The responsible clinician will contact the parent or guardian to discuss the reasons for the missed appointments 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.

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.

Actions following the third missed appointment:

When a child remains uncontactable and/or unvaccinated after a third contact, Ridgeway View Family Practice will mark the patient record as either unable to contact or unvaccinated. 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. A further letter should then be sent 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.

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.