

West of England Specialist Gender Identity Clinic

Non-attendance protocol

Introduction

Non-attendance or 'Did Not Attend' (DNA) is when a person fails to attend or respond to a pre-booked appointment, or has not made contact with the service to cancel that appointment.

Non-attendance is a major issue and a cost to the National Health Service (NHS), and has a significant impact on waiting times.

To support our patients and referrers to understand the steps we will take in order to attempt to manage non-attendance the West of England Specialist Gender Identity Clinic has produced this non-attendance protocol.

We recognise that there may be times when attendance at your appointment is not possible, due to circumstances outside your control. Where this occurs we would encourage you to contact us.

New patients who do not attend their assessment appointments

In the event that patients do not attend, or cancel within 48 hours an appointment for assessment the following will apply:

- The staff member allocated to the appointment that was not attended will review/consider any known concern/risks, or new information into service which may inform these. Should this review generate concerns then the staff member will contact the referrer urgently (if this is by phone then it will be followed up in writing – this may include email). Actions taken will be documented in the patient record.
- Following non-attendance or cancellation of an appointment the patient will be invited by opt in letter to reschedule the appointment. If patients do not respond within 28 days from the date of the opt in letter then they will be discharged. A discharge letter will be sent to the patient and referrer.

Existing patients who do not attend

In the event that patients do not attend, or cancel within 48 hours an appointment once on the treatment pathway then the named professional will:

- Call the patient to establish the reason for non-attendance and review the plan. They will reiterate the responsibility of patients to engage and adhere to the treatment plan and provide a further appointment.
- If the named professional is unable to contact the patient then they will review any known concerns/risks and contact the referrer urgently if required (if by phone following up in writing – this may include email). The patient will also be invited by letter to opt in again within 28 days.
- If patients do not respond to the opt in letter, a further discussion with the Clinical Team Leader/Lead Professional should occur to consider any extenuating circumstances, including risks for the patient in not accessing the service. Depending on the outcome of this discussion there will be a further telephone and written attempt to contact the patient, or they will be discharged.

Appointments for psychological interventions

In the event that patients do not attend, or cancel within 48 hours an appointment with a clinician providing psychological intervention then:

- Contact will be made by either the psychology clinician or the named professional with the patient to establish the reason for non-attendance, and review the need and plan for psychological intervention.
- In some cases if it is deemed appropriate then a further appointment will be offered.
- If the staff member is unable to contact the patient then they will review any known concerns/risks and contact the referrer urgently if required (if by phone following up in writing – this may include email).
- If a further appointment is appropriate then the patient will be invited by letter to opt in to arranging another appointment. If the service does not have contact from the patient within 28 days from the date of the opt in letter, then the patient will be discharged from the psychological intervention treatment pathway, and the named professional will be informed.
- Discharge from the psychological intervention part of treatment does not mean discharge from the whole service

General issues with engagement

Given the nature of treatment for gender dysphoria it is important that patients are fully engaged with their treatment. Where there is evidence of lack of engagement by a patient (e.g. a pattern of non-attendance or cancellation of scheduled contacts with the service over a period of time, repeated failure to have blood tests when requested, or an unwillingness to comply with the agreed individualised treatment plan or to negotiate/agree changes to the individualised treatment plan, where these are medically necessary), then they will be advised in writing that, unless their engagement with the service is restored and maintained in the future, they will be discharged.

Late arrivals

Where patients are late for appointments (either face to face, skype, or phone) the clinician will endeavour to continue with the appointment as planned, or attempt contact again, in the case of skype/phone within the allocated appointment time. However, it is recognised that the contact is likely to be shorter and consideration needs to be made in relation to the value of shorter contact versus a person's traveling distance/costs, point in gender pathway and risks to not undertaking some form of contact. Depending on these factors and the patient's view it may be appropriate to cancel and reschedule.

Re-referral to the service

We recognise that people don't attend appointments for a range of reasons. For patients who have previously been discharged for non-attendance or lack of engagement, a new referral may be accepted, provided that the patient agrees to comply with regards to engagement with service/their assessment and treatment pathway in future.

Referrals of patients discharged under the terms of this protocol for a second time are unlikely to be accepted, unless there is significant evidence that the situation has changed.

Contact details

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