

Safeguard Guide No 10 – January 2019

Failure to Attend Appointments – Was Not Brought

What is it?

Children and adults with care and support needs have the right to access and receive professional support and care to meet their needs and reduce risks to their health and well-being.

Parents/those with parental responsibility are responsible for ensuring a child is brought to health and other appointments. Adults with care and support needs or who are 'at risk' may rely on others to facilitate their attendance at appointments. In most cases, when a child or adult at risk has cancelled or **failed to attend** an appointment, it is the parent/carer that has failed to bring them and for this reason the term "**Was Not Brought**" should be used. Cancellation or failure to bring a child or adult at risk to key appointments may be an indicator of neglect, which is a category of abuse.

It is recognised that in adolescence or adulthood, the child or adult may choose not to attend. If this is the case consideration should be given to whether the child/adult is putting themselves at risk of significant harm by failing to attend, taking into account the child's ability to make a decision (based on their level of maturity, knowledge and understanding regarding the implications of their decision); and of the adult's capacity to make that decision.

What are the Difficulties?

Accessibility

Practitioners should ensure that service provision is accessible to individuals and families and that the timing of appointments and/or home visits and the location of services optimise the opportunities for people to attend.

Services should ensure that there is provision for a person to access support/care without a carer in attendance if they wish to do this.

The person's personal circumstances may determine whether or not they attend appointments, for example, access to suitable transport, financial hardship, which will need to be understood and addressed in advance.

The appropriateness of using written communications needs to be considered so that language, cognitive and/or literacy issues, do not become a barrier to keeping appointments.

Some organisations operate strict 'no show' or 'did not attend (DNA)' policies which do not take into account these issues or the possibility that the subject 'was not brought'.

Lack of Engagement

Consideration should be given to the reason why parents/carers may disengage with services as this will inform the course of action to take. For example, some parents/carers may have a genuine mistrust or fear of a specific profession or intervention and will need reassurance, others may make a deliberate choice not to engage with a particular service or at a specific time and these cases may need a more thorough assessment of risk of the impact of the failed appointment and a more assertive response.

What should practitioners do?

Retain professional curiosity about the reason for the failed appointment.

If it is within a reasonable and safe timescale, rearrange the appointment, perhaps in an alternative setting if possible.

If the 'was not brought' relates to the parents/carer's behaviour, for example, as a result of a mental health issue, substance misuse and/or domestic violence, focus the impact of the failed appointment on the health and well-being of the child or adult at risk and the parents/carer's ability to provide adequate care for them.

For repeat failed appointments, consider whether assertive action is required, for example, to follow the [Stepped Approach for working with Non-Engaging Families](#) or to make a safeguarding referral. Follow your own agency safeguarding procedures.

Record any discussions with the individual and/or family/carers, other professionals, the actions and outcomes relating to this incident. Include a list of any other incidents of 'was not brought' and cancelled appointments in a **chronology** as this will demonstrate neglect as a result of persistent failure to attend appointments.

Remember disengagement is a key risk factor for people and may be an indicator of a crisis or that something more serious is happening.

If you are concerned....

About an adult you can call Gateway to Care on 01422 393000.

About a child you can ask for advice from the Multi Agency Screening Team on 01422 393336

Out of hours for both, contact the Emergency Duty Team on 01422 288000.