



# **Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise**

## **Patient Failure to Attend and Cancellation of Appointments Policy**

### **Version 4**

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Policy will be updated as required in response to a change in national policy or evidence-based guideline.

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## **Patient Failure to Attend and Cancellation of Appointments Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Due to the high demand on the service and the need to ensure consistency of undergraduate student education, failure to keep appointments may result in a patient being taken off the waiting list and treatment provided by Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise being discontinued.

1.2 All patients shall be informed of the Failure to Attend (FTA) policy:

- When adding themselves to the waiting list
- Upon initial attendance for triage assessment
- By publicity notices at reception
- Upon failure of an appointment.

1.3 After reaching the top of the wait list, patients who fail to give sufficient cancellation notice or fail to attend the initial triage appointment, will not be offered a further appointment.

1.4 Exceptions to the terms set out in this policy are continually reviewed and consideration given to exceptional circumstances on an individual basis.

### **2. Failure to Attend – Adult Patients**

2.2 Patients over the age of 16 who fail to attend appointments will be subject to the PDSE failed appointment policy. The patient will be contacted by telephone on the day of the failed appointment, asked to provide a reason for their failure to attend and will be encouraged to book a further appointment. This telephone call will be followed by a failure to attend letter being sent. The letter will reinforce the PDSE FTA policy.

2.3 If the patient cannot be contacted by telephone or refuses to book another appointment they will be sent a letter requesting they book an appointment within 14 days. All reasons given for a failure to attend should be documented in the communications section of the patient database.

2.4 If the patient fails to contact PDSE within the 14 days of the initial letter they will be sent a 'no response' letter. This shall give them an additional 14 days to make contact and book an appointment.

2.5 Failure to book an appointment within this time will result in a final discharge letter being sent, advising that their course of treatment has been closed and that they will be required to seek an alternative dental provider. No further appointments will be offered.

**If a patient fails to attend or fails to attend an appointment on more 2 separate occasions in a 12 month period, they will be denied any further appointments and will be required to find an alternative dental provider.**

### **3. Cancellation of Appointments (less than 24 hours' notice) – Adult Patients**

- 3.1 Patients over the age of 16 who cancel an appointment without giving the required 24hrs notice will be encouraged to rebook the appointment at the time of cancellation.
- 3.2 Where an appointment is not rebooked, the patient will be contacted by the administration team either on the same day of the cancelled appointment or within a reasonable timeframe. The initial attempt to contact the patient will be via telephone. This telephone call will be followed by a short notice cancellation letter being sent. The letter will reinforce the PDSE short notice cancellation policy. If the patient cannot be contacted by telephone the 'Cancelled appointment' letter will be sent.
- 3.3 If the patient fails to contact PDSE within the 14 days of the initial letter, they will be sent a 'no response' letter. This shall give them an additional 14 days to make contact and book an appointment.
- 3.4 Failure to book an appointment within this time will result in a final discharge letter being sent, advising that their course of treatment has been closed and that they will be required to seek an alternative dental provider. No further appointments will be offered.

**If a patient fails to give sufficient notice to cancel on more than 2 occasions in a 12 month period, they will be denied any further appointments and will be required to find an alternative dental provider.**

### **4. Booking Outstanding Treatment – Adult Patients**

- 4.1 Adult patients with outstanding treatment that is not a result of failing to attend an appointment will be contacted by way of letter. An initial letter will be sent to invite the patient to book an appointment within 14 days.
- 4.2 If the patient fails to contact PDSE within the 14 days of the initial letter, they will be sent a further letter. This shall give them an additional 14 days to make contact and book an appointment.
- 4.3 Failure to book an appointment within this time will result in a final discharge letter being sent, advising that their course of treatment has been closed and that

they will be required to seek an alternative dental provider. No further appointments will be offered.

## **5. Paediatric Patients – Was Not Brought**

5.1 The term Was Not Brought (WNB) applies to patients under the age of 16 who fail to attend appointments. The WNB procedure forms part of the PDSE Safeguarding Children Policy.

### **5.2 Was Not Brought Procedure:**

- A telephone contact is to be made in the first instance to enquire as to why the child was not brought and recorded in R4 and a further appointment to be made. If contact is successful then a WNB1 letter should be sent with the new appointment; if the contact is unsuccessful then a WNB1 letter is sent on the following working day advising of the missed appointment and the requirement to book a further appointment. This letter must be produced through the R4 electronic patient records system so that its issue is recorded.
- If no contact is made within 14 days and a further appointment is missed PDSE must then send a WNB2 letter. This must also be produced through R4 to ensure its issue is recorded. This letter will advise that no contact has been made, a further appointment has been missed and that contact must be made to re-appoint. It will also advise that if no contact is made within the next 7 days then information may be shared with the relevant services.
- If still no response / contact is unsuccessful a WNB3 letter must be sent. This must also be produced through R4 to ensure its issue is recorded. If still no contact is made by the parent/guardian of the child/children within 3 working days. A note must be put on the patient file and discussed with safeguarding co-ordinator.
- At this point it may be worth discussing with the safeguarding hubs (see contact details) and other health professionals at this point if there are any other concerns regarding the child or family and if they have different contact details to those held on our system and document and information or advice given clearly on R4.
- If appropriate Safeguarding referral must be made within 24hours and a copy of the referral to be put in the patients notes. It is important to remember, that not all circumstances will warrant a safeguarding referral and if there are any concerns these should be discussed with a safeguarding lead. Instances where there is no outstanding dental treatment for disease or a child is not known to have any dental disease would not necessarily warrant a safeguarding referral.
- If contact is made and appointment is not booked following advice that treatment is necessary, or following a cancellation it is recognised that a parent/guarding may

not be able to make a further appointment at the time they are advised that treatment is necessary or when they have had to cancel an appointment. If this situation occurs, allow 14 days for contact to be made, if no further contact has been made then begin the WNB process.

- Where there are no safeguarding concerns, the course of treatment will be closed and the patients R4 file will be archived. Children under the age of 16 may be reinstated as a PDSE patient for up to 12 months after the failed appointment. Any patients requesting to be reinstated after their 16th birthday may re-join the waiting list.

## **6. Patient Discharge**

6.1 When the decision has been taken to discharge a patient during a course of treatment the appropriate discharge paperwork should be issued and the following details should be given to the patient:

- Reason for discontinuation of treatment
- Details of any outstanding treatment
- Advice on how to access emergency dental care
- Details of how to find an NHS dental care provider.

6.2 Appointment reminders will be issued to patients, unless they explicitly decline. All patients will be asked to give their consent to receiving text message reminders, as this is PDSE's preferred reminder system. Otherwise telephone or letter reminders will be sent.

6.3 Patients should be advised that they should not rely on any form of reminder, if they do not receive a reminder and they have an appointment they should still attend unless otherwise notified.

6.4 Where possible, we will endeavour to book an appointment to suit the patient preferences. However due to the limitations of cohort placements and student clinics this may not always be possible.

6.5 Patients will be asked at each visit if their address or phone number has changed and will be reminded that it is their responsibility to inform the clinic of any change of address or circumstances. Notices will be displayed in the patient waiting areas to reinforce this message.

## **7. Policy Exceptions**

7.1 The patient administration team will adhere to this protocol when dealing with patient failures to attend or short notice cancellations. If there are additional factors to consider, such as the patient being allocated as a student exit case (year 4 and 5

only), then it is the responsibility of the student to raise the issue of their patient failures to attend with the Clinical Lead, who will discuss this with them. If after this discussion it is decided not to implement the standard process and to continue with the patient's treatment, this must be communicated as soon as possible to the Clinic Team Leader who will inform the administration team.

7.2 The management team and team leaders are able to apply discretion to this procedure where they feel it is appropriate. Any deviation from this procedure must be fully documented in the patient records.

**Failure to communicate will result in the standard FTA policy being followed and the patient being discharged.**

## Appendix A

### **Failure to Attend - Community Clinic Patients**

The PDSE community clinic provides dentistry to adults from a range of socially excluded and deprived groups. These groups may have additional complications in their lives which make it harder to attend appointments. A study has found that those in the most deprived groups failed to attend more dental appointments than those in the least deprived groups (West, Stones & Wanyonyi, 2020). The attendance policy for community clinic patients is therefore more flexible to avoid further disadvantaging these patients. However, it must still reflect the need to use clinical time efficiently. The following policy for community clinic patients will be at the discretion of the treating clinician.

#### **Failure to Attend Procedure:**

1. Community clinic patients who fail to attend an appointment will be contacted by telephone on the day of the failed appointment and will be encouraged to book a further appointment. This telephone call will be followed by a 'Community clinic Failure to Attend letter' being sent. If the patient cannot be contacted by telephone or refuses to book another appointment they will be sent a letter requesting they book an appointment within 14 days.
2. If the patient fails to contact PDSE within the 14 days of the initial letter they will be sent a 'no response' letter. This shall give them an additional 14 days to make contact and book an appointment. Failure to book an appointment within this time will result in closure of any course of treatment and return to the back of the community clinic waiting list.
3. Community clinic patients who fail to attend two dental appointments in a row or three within a course of treatment will have their course of treatment closed and will be returned to the back of the community clinic waiting list. A 'community clinic return to waiting list letter' will be sent. This letter will give the patient or their support work an option to appeal this if there are extenuating circumstances to be considered.
4. All community clinic patients who meet the above criteria for discharge must be discussed with the treating clinician prior to discharge.
5. While on the community clinic waiting list patients can still access emergency treatment, however no routine appoints shall be booked until they have reached the top of the waiting list.
6. Frequent late notice cancellations may result in the patient being returned to the back of to the waiting list as per the FTA policy.



7. Community clinic patients who cancel an appointment without giving the required 24hrs notice will be encouraged to rebook the appointment at the time of cancellation. Where an appointment is not rebooked, the patient will be contacted by the administration team either on the same day of the cancelled appointment or as near as administratively possible. Initial attempt to contact the patient will be via telephone. This telephone call will be followed by a short notice cancellation letter being sent. The letter will reinforce the PDSE short notice cancellation policy. If the patient cannot be contacted by telephone the 'cancelled appointment' letter will be sent.
8. If the patient fails to contact PDSE within the 14 days of the initial letter, they will be sent a 'no response' letter. This shall give them an additional 14 days to make contact and book an appointment. Failure to book an appointment within this time will result in closure of any course of treatment and a return to the back to the community clinic waiting list.
9. Where the patient has given their consent to share information with another health professional or support worker about their care, details of missed/cancelled appointments will be shared to facilitate and support the patient to attend future appointments.