



It is inevitable that, on occasion, patients attending appointments at Melbourne & Chellaston Medical Practice will be late due to circumstances beyond their control. However, this document provides direction for the management of patients who fail to attend an appointment or who repeatedly fail to attend appointments.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Did Not Attend (DNA) Policy.

The organisation aims 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 with regard to 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This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time.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 practice, such as agency workers, locums and contractors.

### **Patient responsibility**

In accordance with the NHS Constitution, patients should:

“Please keep appointments or cancel within reasonable time. Receiving treatment within the maximum waiting times may be compromised unless you do.” It is courtesy and expectation that patients inform this organisation as soon as possible if they are aware that they will be late.

It should be noted that sometimes, patients arrive and simply take a seat in the waiting room assuming that there is no need to ‘book in’ upon arrival. To avoid any inconvenience for all, a Self-check-in poster is available here to remind patients to use the self-check-in screen upon arrival.

### **Management of late arrivals**

To adhere to the appointment schedule and to ensure that all patients receive an excellent level of service, late arrivals are to be managed as follows:

Less than ten minutes late – staff will:

- Mark the patient as having arrived, advising them that the clinician may already be seeing the next patient
- Explain that the patient will be seen after the clinician has finished with their current patient
- If appropriate, remind the patient of the importance of attending appointments on time

More than ten minutes late – staff will advise the patient that they have missed their appointment and offer the following as appropriate:

- Offer the patient an appointment later during that session or that day (if an appointment is available)
- Discuss the patient with the clinician and, if in agreement, and the patient is willing to wait, advise that they will be seen at the end of that session. The patient should be made aware that this may be some time.
- Should the above option not be possible, the patient should rebook for another appointment

It should be noted that it is at the discretion of the clinician whether the patient is seen or not, bearing in mind there may be a valid reason for being late and each case will be considered. If there is a clinical need, the clinician will advise the staff accordingly.

Ordinarily, clinicians are to be informed only via a screen message.

### **Management of waiting patients**

Should staff note that a patient has been waiting for more than 20 minutes, they should apologise to the patient for the delay, then explain the reason for the delay. It could be that the clinician is running late, as patients sometimes need more than the allotted appointment slot, or that there has been an administrative error.

Should the latter be the case, then the reception team should advise the clinician of this and confirm that the patient did not arrive late for their appointment. Every effort should then be made to ensure that the patient is seen in sequential order rather than being offered a later appointment.

If this situation occurs on a regular basis, then the management will consider conducting an audit with additional training being a consideration.

Should any patient have waited for more than 20 minutes then this should be investigated. Very often this will be because the clinic is running behind but sometimes it may be the case that the patient has forgotten to check-in or that the reception team has failed to book the patient on the system as having arrived.

### **Recording of information**

Reception staff are to annotate the outcome of the discussion with the clinician with regard to those patients who are more than ten minutes late.

### **Patient awareness**

If a patient is late and the appointment is cancelled, then this is to be classified as a “Did not attend” as the appointment could not be reused. The patient may, however, still expect to be seen at a later date, causing longer waiting times for all patients.

To assist with patient understanding of the DNA problem, the following posters are available:

- 3 reasons not to miss your appointment
- Did not attend information

Further reading to support this issues of patients failing to attend their appointments, including actions needed for missed adult and child appointments, with letters is contained within the Did Not Attend (DNA) Policy.

Any of the posters detailed in this policy can be used as a patient awareness tool within the organisation or on the website.

### **Clinic lateness**

The organisation is fully committed to running to schedule and, should this not be the case, patients will be advised at the earliest opportunity as to the reasons why and the expected duration of the delay. Reasons for delay may be, but are not limited to:

- Medical emergencies
- Complex routine appointments overrunning
- Delay in staff arriving due to external factors beyond their control
- Administrative error by a patient or staff member

In all cases, reception staff will advise patients accordingly.

Occasionally a patient may suggest that they want to make a complaint following an overrunning clinic. Should they wish to do so, then the Complaints Procedure should be referred to.

### **Summary**

Appointment punctuality ensures that the organisation remains on schedule and that patients are seen on time. Whilst it is accepted that emergencies and complex cases may cause unavoidable delays, this is an unusual event, the timing of which is not foreseeable.

Staff should encourage patients to attend their appointments on time, facilitating the smooth running of the organisation and avoiding unnecessary wasted appointments.