

Adult Social Care (ASC) no reply procedure

Introduction

This procedure arose from a local safeguarding adults' investigation which recommended a universal 'no reply' approach to be adopted across community-based services including commissioned services.

Purpose

This procedure aims to give clear guidance on the actions ASC staff should take where there is no reply to a visit to a person's home. By taking a consistent approach it should help ensure the safety of the people we support and that emergency services are called as appropriate.

Private, voluntary and independent commissioned services are subject to separate processes. If a provider receives a no reply, they will follow their own process but should also notify ASC if service is commissioned by ASC.

Scope

All ASC staff that visit or call on people in their own homes should follow this procedure.

Legislation and guidance

This procedure relates to the Care Quality Commission's Theme Three, "Ensuring Safety within the system."

Definition of 'no reply'

- If staff are unable to gain access to provide the care, arrange the service or they are unable to establish contact with the person at the property as a result of no response, then the visit should be considered a no reply and the no reply plan followed.
- Access refused by the person or a third party which can include conversations through a door, letterbox, or window if this gives cause for concern, then the visit should be considered a no reply and the no reply plan followed.

Staff have a duty of care and should follow the person's no reply plan. Service users have a responsibility wherever possible to inform staff if they will be unavailable to receive care / service in their own homes.

Procedure

On initial assessment, and if appropriate to the needs of the person, staff should agree and document with all service users and others e.g., their families / informal carers, a no reply plan which staff should follow in the case of a 'no reply' situation.

All service users with an active Care Manager, Social Worker or Occupational Therapy staff member should have a no reply plan. If the client refuses participation in a no reply plan, then this should be recorded.

All no reply plans should follow the same format and be easily accessible. Please see Appendix 1, 2 and 3 for practical advice to take on a no reply and how to record in the CSP1/ OT assessment.

The no reply plan **should identify a main key holder / family member / other person that staff can contact in the first instance.**

If this is different to the contacts identified on the CSP1 front sheet (or SWIFT front sheet if no CSP1) then this needs recorded specifically in the no reply detail section on the CSP1 or the 'enabling access to others' section of the OT assessment document.

The plan should identify other people that can also be contacted as required e.g., other family members; appropriate nearby others such as a warden or specific neighbours that staff can approach in the case of a no reply.

The plan may also note specific circumstances and actions to be taken.

The no reply plan should be reviewed/checked whenever the Care Plan is being reviewed or on completion of an OT assessment document.

Circumstances where No Reply Plan needs considered

It is usual for staff to make a mutually convenient appointment with a person before visiting. If staff call at a house at the pre-arranged time and there is no reply they should follow the plan.

If the person cannot be seen or traced and / or there is any cause for concern, staff should use their professional judgement, taking into account the person's past history, previous history of no reply and level of vulnerability as to what action they should take. Staff should contact their manager or the duty manager at the earliest practicable opportunity to discuss the situation.

The purpose of speaking to the identified others in the no reply plan is to try and trace the service user, determine their wellbeing as far as reasonably possible and to decide what action, if any, should be taken. In the event of a no reply

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and the identified other people being unavailable then staff should contact their manager or the duty manager to discuss the situation and consider following the missing person protocol or approaching the emergency services if the concern is felt to be high. This can include contacting MASH for guidance / advice

If a person can be seen to be collapsed or considered in such a condition that warrants extreme concern to their well-being, then staff must call the emergency services immediately and alert their manager or the duty manager.

Staff must remain at the address until the emergency services arrive and pass on any relevant information. The manager or duty manager should ensure that any known family or other contacts are made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

All no reply episodes should be recorded appropriately in the person's records. All discussions, actions and decisions should also be recorded and that these clearly indicate the reasons why specific actions were taken.

Appendix 1 - No Reply Plan – standard procedure

If a service user fails to answer the door staff should:

1. Ring the doorbell / knock loudly again several times allowing time for the service user to come to the door
2. If possible, look through the letter box, listen then call the service user; do this several times
3. Where it is safe and practicable:
 - look through windows to see if anyone is in and try to get their attention; and
 - go round to the back / sides of the property and check for other entrances / windows to try as above
4. Telephone the service user if you have the number to hand – or retrieve the number via office/duty
5. Check the no reply plan on CSP1/ OT assessment document to see if there are specific actions required or individual guidance given regarding this client's risk behaviour – you may need to remind yourself of what this is via office/duty call
6. Contact all recorded contacts from the CSP1/OT assessment document to ascertain possible other whereabouts
7. Discuss with Team Manager and facilitate any specific actions such as checking relevant locations recorded in no reply plan. The Care Manager / Social worker / Occupational Therapy staff member needs to ensure the Team Manager or duty worker is aware of the above as additional support from the team may be required.
8. Discuss possible need to contact emergency services – this should be considered at every stage of the procedure if the Care Manager/ Social Worker / Occupational Therapy worker feel the concern to be high. If unsure, then the team manager should contact the MASH team for further guidance/support

Additional things to consider during above:

- Person's case history / vulnerability
- Is this unusual / out of character?
- Steps already taken to locate the person
- When the person was last seen and how they presented
- Habits (has the person recently been into respite and returned in an emergency)?
- Risk factors – is the person subject to Safeguarding, prone to falls, do they have a health condition, use specialist aids, consume alcohol?
- Could the client be in hospital? This could be clarified via the GP practice

Additional circumstances where the no reply plan needs considered:

If staff have a conversation through the door / letterbox / window and the service user appears to be unwell or in distress staff should call for an ambulance. Staff should alert their manager or the duty manager and remain at the address until the emergency services arrive and pass on any relevant information. The manager or duty manager should ensure that any known family or other contacts are made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

If staff have a conversation through the door / letterbox / window but do not set eyes on the service user, they cannot assume they are safe and well even if they say they are. Staff should follow the no reply plan.

If staff set eyes on the service user by any of the means noted above and they do not respond, for example, they are collapsed or in such a condition that warrants extreme concern to their well-being, staff should call for an ambulance. Staff should alert their manager or the duty manager and remain at the address until the emergency services arrive and pass on any relevant information. The manager or duty manager should ensure that any known family or other contacts are made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

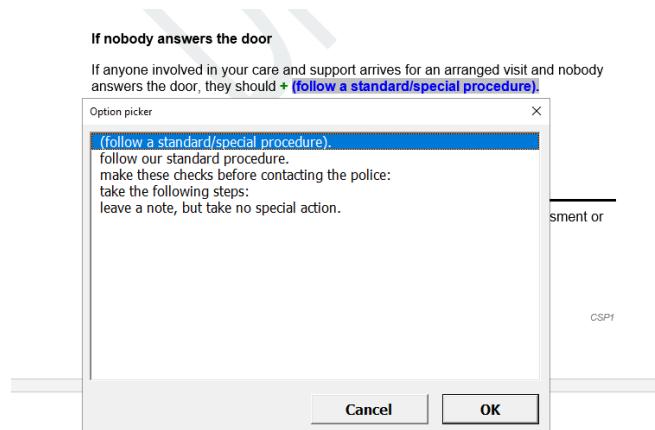
If staff set eyes on the service user by any of the means noted above and they respond in an appropriate manner staff should encourage them to answer the door. If the service user continues not to answer the door staff should discuss with their manager/duty manager regarding next steps.

If staff are denied access by a third party and there is no contact with the service user, they should follow the no reply plan and discuss with their Team Manager as soon as possible.

Appendix 2 – Completing the CSP1

The CSP1 has a specific area for recording the no reply plan. This must be considered and recorded for all service users at initial assessment or review (for those current service users).

This is a screen print which shows the fields for action when no reply on calling:-

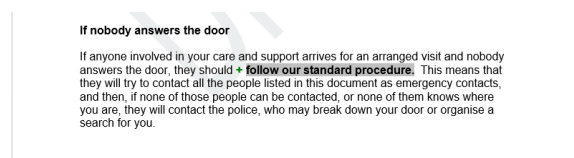


What action is needed if there is no reply on calling.

There are four available responses to this:

- Follow our standard procedure
- Make these checks before contacting the police
- Take the following steps
- Leave a note, but take no special action

Follow our standard procedure - The Care Manager / Social Worker should contact those people identified on the service user's front sheet and are regarded as the main contacts for the purpose of the no reply procedure.



Leave a note, but take no special action – As advised the Care Manager / Social Worker will leave a note and ensure they record in the service user's record the appropriate note

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If nobody answers the door

If anyone involved in your care and support arrives for an arranged visit and nobody answers the door, they should + **leave a note, but take no special action.**

Take the following steps or Make these checks before contacting the police - If there is any specific information regarding contacts, possible whereabouts, history of previous no reply behaviour etc that is not recorded within the CSP1 OR needs summarised in this plan then this needs recorded within the free text field

If nobody answers the door

If anyone involved in your care and support arrives for an arranged visit and nobody answers the door, they should + **make these checks before contacting the police:**

If nobody answers the door

If anyone involved in your care and support arrives for an arranged visit and nobody answers the door, they should + **take the following steps:**

There is no need to duplicate information that is already in swift however it is important that clear information can be accessed quickly by Care Managers, Social Workers and others such as Duty Workers and Team Managers. This will ensure that the most appropriate response to a no reply is actioned as quickly as possible and to minimise any potential risks to the service user.

Appendix 3 – Occupational Therapy (OT) Staff

- Where an OT staff member is the key worker the no reply plan should be recorded at the point of OT initial assessment within the OT assessment document under the 'enabling access to others' section.
- Where an OT staff member is not the key worker the no reply plan will be on the CSP1 as per the above guidance and OT assessment document should state 'refer to CSP1 for no reply plan' within the 'enabling access to others' section of the OT assessment document.