

Community Services Business Unit '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 CSBU care management 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.

Scope

All CSBU 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 "Essential Standards of Quality and Safety" Outcome 4, "Care and welfare of people who use services".

Definition of 'no reply'

If staff are unable to gain access and provide the care / service as arranged and they are unable to establish contact with the person at the property as a result of:

- No response; or
- Access refused by the person or third party

then the visit should be considered a 'no reply' and the 'no reply' plan followed. Access refused includes conversations through a door, letterbox, or window.

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'.

All service users with an active Care Manager should have a 'no reply' plan.

All 'no reply' plans should follow the same format and be easily accessible. Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for practical advice to take on a 'no reply' and how to record in the CP1.

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 CP1 front sheet then this needs recorded specifically in the 'no reply' detail section on the CP1. The plan should also identify a number of other people that can also be contacted as required e.g. several 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.

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' and the identified other people being unavailable then staff should contact their manager or the duty manager to discuss the situation and consider approaching the emergency services if the concern is felt to be high.

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.

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Appendix 1 - No Reply Plan – standard procedure

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

1. Ring the door bell / 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 they have the number to hand
5. Check 'no reply' plan on CP1 to see if there are specific actions required or individual guidance given re this client's risk behaviour
6. Contact all recorded contacts from the CP1 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 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 / Team Manager feel the concern to be high.

Additional things to consider during above:-

- Is this unusual / out of character?
- Person's case history / vulnerability
- Steps already taken to locate the person
- When the person was last seen and how they presented
- Particular 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?

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 follow the 'no reply' plan.

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.

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Appendix 2 – Completing the CP1

The new CP1 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 of the new version and shows the new fields added for action when no reply on calling and include:-

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document titled 'CP1 for 74732 - Aug 09 2012 (CD-assessment)105531 - DRAFT'. The document is on Page 6 and is marked as 'CONFIDENTIAL'. The form content is as follows:

SwIR ID: 74732

People involved in drawing up risk management plan - please list all people including person and carer(s)
Care manager, OT

Detail any area(s) of disagreement

Crisis and Contingency Plan
Circumstances in which extra support is needed e.g. problems/risks are becoming worse
Deterioration in health - further impaired vision, arthritis causing further problems with dexterity Increase in care needs

Action to be taken in such a crisis or emergency
Contact care manager

Persons or service who will take action in a crisis
Daughter, care manager

What action is needed if there is no reply on calling? Select Answer +
Details of special steps on no reply (if relevant):
Standard no reply procedure
Take special steps as described
No action needed

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

There are three available responses to this:-

- Standard no reply procedure (as explained above)
- Take special steps
- No action required

If the first option is chosen then this means that the Care Manager would 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.

If there is any specific information re contacts, possible whereabouts, history of previous no reply behaviour etc that is not recorded within the CP1 OR needs summarised in this plan then this needs recorded within the second field titled :-

Details of special steps on no reply (if relevant)'.

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 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.