

# Management of Appointments Policy

## Our Appointments and Drop-in Sessions Management Policy

### Introduction

As an advice charity, we try to do our best to provide a high quality service to as many clients as we can. Our service is always in high demand and many people in Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey need our help.

We currently run a drop-in system where all clients will see a member of our Client Advice Team initially. During a short interview the Client Advice Team will triage clients and assess what their issue/s is/are. The appropriate arrangements will then be made to help you, the client, with your issue/s.

The Client Advice Team may:

1. Deal with your issue themselves, but restrict it to cases when they are able to help within the short triage interview time or an issue is urgent.
2. Ask you to wait once again and allocate you to an 'on duty' Volunteer General Adviser to be seen as soon as possible that day.
3. And/or refer you to one of our specialist workers if the issue is more complex and this is appropriate. An **appointment** will then be arranged for you to see an appropriate Specialist Caseworker.
4. Ask a specialist case-worker to see you immediately if it's an urgent involvement is required.

In all cases, you will be provided with as much advice and information as possible and may be given information away with you to help you resolve your issues. Our service is provided by both volunteers and staff who try to do the best that they can to help you with your problems.

When you miss appointments without giving us notice, it can have a serious impact on the service because that appointment slot is unfilled. This reduces the number of clients that our Specialist Caseworkers can see and prevents them from helping more people. For that reason, we have the following policy to deal with appointment problems.

### General Principles

We aim to be consistent in the way we respond when you are late for appointments or do not turn up at all, hence the need for a clear policy to follow. This helps us make the best use of our appointment time and ensures the bureau can help as many clients as possible.

### Informing the bureau if you are going to be late for an appointment

- You should telephone the caseworker as soon as you can if you know you are going to be late.
- If you are running late but expects to arrive no more than 10 minutes late you must let the bureau know and we will try to keep your appointment open so that you are still seen by an adviser.
- If you are running late but expects to arrive between 10 and 15 minutes late you may be told that the adviser will not be able to see you because the appointment has been given to someone else. It will depend very much on the circumstances of that particular day.
- If you are running late and expect to arrive more than 15 minutes late it will be assumed that you are not going to attend the appointment. This is because other clients are scheduled to be seen,

therefore it is unlikely that we will be able to advise you and you will need to return on another day.

### **Informing the bureau If you cannot attend your appointment**

- If you expect to arrive late for your appointment or are unable to attend your appointment you should telephone **01463 237664** OR **if you have been given a specialist adviser's direct number you should use that as soon as you can.** This will allow us to give the "slot" to someone else.
- If it is the your first cancelled appointment then we will try and give you another appointment as soon as possible. We are an extremely busy bureau so it could be several weeks before another appointment is available. This is one of the reasons that we advise all clients to attend their appointments, especially if the problem is urgent.
- You should also be aware that if you do not contact us to let us know that you are not going to attend, we will note this on our computer system and assume that you no longer need our help.

### **Procedure if you miss ONE appointment**

- We understand that life can be complicated and that unforeseen circumstances do arise, we therefore can occasionally make allowances to the procedure detailed above.

### **Procedure if you miss TWO OR MORE appointments**

- If you fail to attend a second appointment then we will assume that you no longer need our help and that unless this has been due to exceptional circumstances, if you subsequently contact us, it is unlikely that we will be able to offer another appointment and you would need to access our walk-in service again.

### **If Clients miss THREE OR MORE appointments, or continually refuse our advice**

- If you consistently fail to attend our appointments, or if you continually ignore the advice that we have given, then we may exclude you from our service. This will only be done in the most serious of circumstances and we will always notify you in writing if we intend to do this.

### **If Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey CAB needs to reschedule an appointment**

Whilst we make every effort to ensure that you are seen when your appointment is scheduled, there *are* occasions when we may need to reschedule an appointment because a volunteer or member of staff is ill, or due to circumstances beyond our control.

If we need to reschedule an appointment we undertake to:

- Contact you as soon as we become aware of the problem. We will always try to telephone to let you know that there is a problem. This is why it is so important you provide us with an up to date telephone number or an alternative way of getting a message to you.
- If we cannot reach you by telephone, we will leave a voicemail explaining that there is a problem, and request that you contact us on 01463 237664 to rearrange the appointment.
- If we haven't heard from you by the end of the day, and if there is enough notice, we will notify you in writing of the need to reschedule. However, in some instances this may not be possible, as the problem may have arisen at very short notice for example, if a volunteer has called in sick that morning.

- If we need to reschedule, we will try to offer another appointment at the same location, or one elsewhere if urgency dictates that this is necessary.

### **Monitoring non-attendance**

We record all instances of repeat non-attendance to appointments by clients in our case recording system.

### **Comments, suggestions and complaints**

If you have any kind of feedback about our service or our appointments policy, we want to hear it. Unless you tell us, it is difficult for us to know of your comment, suggestion or complaint.

Please provide this in writing to us. This allows us to consider your feedback in detail and we will respond to you in writing.

We will always try to resolve your issue to your satisfaction if we can – if we are able to, we will try to change the aspect of the service that you are unhappy with, or try to find another solution for you.

If you have problems writing or communicating any feedback, you will be asked to attend our walk-in service and we will arrange for someone to take details of your feedback for further action.