CONSUMERS THAT DO NOT RESPOND TO A SCHEDULED VISIT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to outline Bilingual Care's consistent, safe and accountable processes for managing situations where a consumer does not respond to scheduled visits or contact attempts.

It is crucial to follow a structured, safety-focused action plan to ensure consumer well-being while protecting the worker. This ensures appropriate and timely action for continuity of care, risk mitigation (minimise the risk of an adverse event or it may provide for an earlier discovery of a mishap) and compliance with duty of care requirements.

This policy and procedure applies to all Bilingual Care staff, associated providers and volunteers involved in consumer care, and meets all legislation, regulations and Standards.

All staff and health professionals are accountable for their own practice and are to only work within their scope of practice.

Applicable Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

- *Standard 1: The Person*
- *Standard 2: The Organisation*
- *Standard 3: The Care and Services*
- *Standard 5: Clinical Care*

Definitions

Generic Response Plan – a safety action plan to ensure safety and duty of care to all consumers who do not respond to a scheduled visit.

Response Plan - an individualised and documented safety protocol if a consumer does not answer the door or respond to a scheduled visit. The Plan is a standard requirement for community care and home visitation services to ensure safety of vulnerable consumers who may have suffered a fall or medical emergency. It may also outline reasons why a consumer may not respond, if needed.

Non-Response - No reply to phone calls, SMS, emails or door knocks within expected time frames.

Personal Response Systems - monitored Emergency Pendant used by some consumers as part of their Safety Response Plan.

Scheduled Visit or Service – a pre-arranged appointment for a home visit to provide services e.g. personal care, home help, transport to an appointment or other activity provided to an eligible consumer.

Welfare Check - safety check conducted by an authorised party (e.g. Police) where there are concerns for a consumer's well-being.

Policy

Services that Bilingual Care delivers in the community are designed to be flexible and responsive to the individual needs of each consumer. A consumer's autonomy is to be respected and balanced with Bilingual Care's duty to protect the safety consumers.

Consumers are required to have a planned response for when they do not respond to a scheduled visit. This response needs to be individualised for each consumer, based on their assessed needs, and followed by staff in the event of no response.

Bilingual Care is committed to taking timely, documented and strict escalating action when a consumer does not respond to contact attempts on a schedule visit.

Procedures

Roles and Responsibilities

Bilingual Care is responsible for:

- ensuring processes and practices are in place to achieve an ongoing partnership with consumers in the assessment, planning and review of their care and services to ensure services delivered align with the consumer's needs and minimise no response situations
- employing both experienced and qualified staff to deliver safe care and services
- having open and transparent feedback and complaints mechanisms in place to handle feedback and complaints via the *Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure*
- having a continuous improvement process in place for on ongoing improvements in care and services

The Managing Director is responsible for:

- assessment and development of individualised *No Response Plans* that document processes to follow if a consumer does not respond to scheduled visit
- ensuring access to advocates, language services (interpreters) is facilitated, as required
- ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of consumers is respected and reinforced, including a decision to not have a *No Response Plan* and documenting this decision as part of dignity of risk
- ensuring all staff are familiar with and follow the requirements in this policy and procedure, document accurately and escalate concerns in an appropriate and timely manner
- ensuring staff have sufficient skills, knowledge and ability to meet the requirements, including that all staff have current basic First Aid training
- submitting a SIRS report (as per Bilingual Care's *Consumer Incident Management Policy and Procedure* (if applicable), and
- reviewing and updating *No Response Plans* every 12 months or sooner in the event of an incident, change in needs / health status or change of emergency contact details.

Consumers are responsible for:

- timely notification to Bilingual Care if they are not going to be home for the pre-arranged visit and
- making sure Emergency contacts know they have been nominated as a contact, and
- Bilingual Care has their current contact details.

Developing a Planned Approach

The Managing Director will develop a *No Response Plan* during initial assessment and care planning in partnership with the consumer and their family/supporters and document details as part of the consumer's *Care Plan*. This plan can be enacted in the event a consumer does not respond when Bilingual Care's staff arrive for a scheduled visit.

As part of care planning, the Managing Director will take into consideration the consumer's history of falls, mental health problems, Dementia and may offer some suggested strategies to consumers e.g. medical alert systems, daily phone calls, storage of a spare key with Bilingual Care or use of coded key safe installed at the consumers home (ensuring consumers permission is obtained and documented as to whom and what circumstances the key may be accessed).

The *No Response Plan* is to include:

- contact person's name and phone number who can do a welfare check of the consumer if they are not responding/contactable and there is a concern for their safety
- next of kin and their emergency contact details
- whether the service has access to a spare key for the consumer's home
- the course of action to be taken after no response during a scheduled visit, including what action should be taken where the emergency contact does not respond, or there are indicators that emergency services should be called first and
- proactive strategies to be taken to minimise the impact to a consumer if there is no response during a scheduled visit (e.g., details of the location of a coded key safe at the consumer's home, or the location and contact details of an emergency contact who has a key).

Some consumers, such as those who are assessed as at risk, or with a pattern of not responding to scheduled visits, should have appropriate documentation on how the staff member is to respond in the event they are not home during a scheduled visit. This is to be developed with consumers (or their carer / supporter, if appropriate) to ensure it respects their choice and control.

A copy of the *No Response Plan* is to be provided to the consumer, and other relevant stakeholders (with the consumer's consent, and respecting privacy and confidentiality requirements).

If a consumer does not want an individual *No Response Plan*, Bilingual Care has a Generic Plan in place to ensure the safety and duty of care for all consumers without an individual plan. Refer to *Where a Consumer Does Not Want a No Response Plan* section below.

For any occasions where the consumer's *No Response Plan* has been activated, a summary of events is to be documented in the consumer's file in Ezihealth.

The Managing Director will maintain clinical progress notes to document ongoing interventions and changes to the consumer's health condition and keep the consumer's *Care Plan* current and updated regularly, and/or when changes to care occur.

Each consumer's *No Response Plan* will be reviewed and updated every 12 months, or sooner in the event of an incident, a change in needs or health status, or a change of emergency contact details.

Staff are to keep informed of individual *No Response Plans* for each consumer as part of their duty of care obligations, which can be accessed in the consumer's file in Ezihealth.

To help reduce the incidence of a consumer not being home for their scheduled visit and requiring the *No Response Plan* to be enacted, Bilingual Care will provide consumers (or their carer / supporter, if appropriate) with reminders of their scheduled service by sending an SMS reminder 24hrs prior to their scheduled visit.

Where a key safe is unable to be installed at the consumer's property, and a key is to be held by Bilingual Care, the consumer's or appointed decision-maker's written permission must be obtained. This permission should include details regarding who can access to the key and under what conditions.

Where a consumer receives services from a provider other than Bilingual Care, the Managing Director should endeavour to develop a joint plan that ensures both services know how to respond and notify necessary contacts and services.

Implementing No Response Plans

Should a consumer not respond to a scheduled visit, staff must take the initial steps to implement the consumer's agreed *No Response Plan*.

Where staff need to enter a consumer's home in line with a *No Response Plan*, they should be accompanied. The person accompanying does not have to be Bilingual Care staff member but should be someone appropriate to the circumstance (e.g., a neighbour, emergency worker, or police officer). Where this is not possible, staff should call the Managing Director and remain on the phone while entering the property.

If a consumer has an unexplained absence from care and they remain uncontactable with a reasonable concern for their safety, health or wellbeing, this must be reported to the local Police and/or ambulance. The Managing Director will report the matter to Police.

If the consumer remains uncontactable and there is reasonable concern for their safety, health or wellbeing, the Managing Director must submit a **SIRS Reportable Incident** (see Bilingual Care's *Consumer Incident Management Policy and Procedure* for guidance on reporting requirements and timeframes).

In the case of death of a consumer, see Bilingual Care's *End of Life Policy and Procedure* which includes steps for *Managing an Unexpected Death in a Home Setting*.

Any action that has occurred as part of implementing the consumer's *No Response Plan* must be documented on the consumer's file in Ezihealth.

Where a Consumer Does Not Want a No Response Plan

If a consumer or their nominated decision-maker advise they do not want a *No Response Plan*, the Managing Director will respect the consumer's wishes and document this decision in the consumer's file as part of Bilingual Care's dignity of risk processes.

Bilingual Care has a generic safety action plan in place to ensure the safety and duty of care for all consumers without an individual *No Response Plan*. This is detailed in *APPENDIX 1 – Action Plan to Manage a 'No Response' Scenario for a Scheduled Visit.*

Where the consumer doesn't have an individual *No Response Plan* in place, and staff are carrying out a scheduled visit, if they have concerns or there is an indication that something may be wrong, they must follow the ***Action Plan to Manage a 'No Response' Scenario for a Scheduled Visit*** (see *APPENDIX 1 – Action Plan to Manage a 'No Response' Scenario for a Schedule Visit* at the end of this Policy and Procedure).

Any action or inaction must be documented on the consumer's file.

Claiming for Services / Cancelled Visits

For any occasions where a *No Response Plan* has been activated for a consumer, a summary of events must be documented in the consumer's case notes. This may be claimed by Bilingual Care, with proper documentation and aligns with the Support at Home Manual[1] in relation to service cancellations and as per the consumer's *Service Agreement*.

Where a scheduled visit is cancelled at short notice (less than 2 days' notice of cancellation) by the consumer, or Bilingual Care's staff arrive for a visit and the consumer is not home, the services that otherwise would have been provided can be claimed. This includes when an individual or generic *No Response Plan* has been activated and the outcome is well documented in the consumer's file.

Any claims/charges for services must be discussed and agreed with the consumer and be in accordance with their *Service Agreement*.

Supporting Documents

Documents relevant to this policy and procedure include:

- *Initial Assessment and Care Planning Policy and Procedure*
- *Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure*
- *No Response Plans*
- *Consumer Risk Assessments*
- *Care Plans*
- *Service Agreements*

Monitoring and Review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at least every two years by the Leadership Team.

[1] Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (2025) Support at Home program manual: A guide for registered providers. Australian Government, Canberra, accessed 22 April 2026, https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/support-at-home-program-manual-a-guide-for-registered-providers

Reviews will incorporate staff, consumer, and other stakeholder feedback.

Bilingual Care's *Continuous Improvement Plan* will be used to record improvements identified and monitor the progress of their implementation. Where relevant, this information will be considered as part of Bilingual Care's service planning and delivery processes.

APPENDIX 1 – ACTION PLAN TO MANAGE A 'NO RESPONSE' SCENARIO FOR A SCHEDULED VISIT

Action Plan to Manage a ''No Response'' Scenario for a Schedule Visit

1. **Immediate On-site Action**
   - Call out, knock loudly on the door.
   - Attempt to reach the consumer via phone at lease 2-3 times (including other agreed communication methods e.g. SMS, Email as required).
   - Allow reasonable time for response.
   - Check around exterior of the home for signs of occupancy i.e. if the consumer is visible or if there are any signs of an emergency.
   - Enquire with neighbours if permitted, to ask if they have seen the consumer.
   - If consumer answers but indicated they do not want to be disturbed, their request is to be respected and documented in consumers' notes.

2. **Immediate Safety and Reporting**
   - Contact the consumer's designated emergency contacts if there is NO response.
   - Notify the Managing Director to report the missed visit and seek direction on next steps.

3. **Escalation Pathway (if safety is unknown)**
   - The Managing Director to contact the local Police for a wellness / welfare check if the consumer cannot be reached and there is a concern for their safety.
   - Notify the attending GP of non-response and any clinical concerns (applicable).
   - Continue follow-up until contact is made or the situation is resolved.

4. **Report as Missing**
   - Unexplained absences from care must be reported to the local Police within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident.
   - Notify the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (SIRS Report) if the consumer remains uncontactable.

5. **Documentation**
   - Document all attempts to contact the consumer, including:
     - date/s and time/s
     - method of contact
     - any relevant observations
     - escalation actions
     - communication with family, GP, Case Manager, or DVA (as applicable) and
     - outcomes to the No Response during scheduled visit

Ensure all documentation is factual, objective and free of assumptions.

Also document if patterns of non-response emerge and notify the Managing Director to organise a review of the consumer's *Care Plan*.

6. **Post Incident Reviews**
   - Management - Proactive Actions
     - Review and update the consumer's *Care Plan* and notes for risk factors, any known communication issues, previous non-response patterns and clinical concerns.

- Update the consumer's individualised *No Response Plan* to ensure it reflects current risks to enable staff to know what to do.
- Verify emergency contacts to ensure emergency contact information is current and up to date.
- Inform the consumer's support staff of any changes to the plans.

- Risk Assessment
  - Review the consumer's cognitive impairment, mental health concerns, falls risk, recent deterioration, social isolation.
  - Review attendance patterns - if a consumer frequently fails to respond, re-assess the schedule for the suitability of the *Care Plan* with the Managing Director.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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