

No Wrong Door, ‘No... but’ approach: An Alternative Offer for Services Supporting People in Poverty

Purpose

To end the “dead end, no” or “not our problem or responsibility” experience, partners adopt a shared **No Wrong Door philosophy**, offering a consented **Alternative [‘No, but...’] Offer**. If unable to directly support a person, this approach requires service providers to understand and connect people to alternative meaningful support, turning a ‘No’ into a “*we can’t do X, but here’s what we can do*”, ensuring that every contact leads to help — directly, via a warm handover, or through a co-produced alternative offer.

Related concepts:

- Waiting Well
- No wrong Door
- Warm handovers/referrals

This approach can be considered as an extension of personalised (person-centred) care, providing vital infrastructure to support individuals and populations, including those experiencing poverty and at risk of social and health inequality.

1) Shared Commitments: Charter, Campus, and Consent

- **Organisational ‘Humanise’ Charter (sign-up required):** Partners publicly commit to the No... but approach. A core condition: *the first organisation keeps ownership until a warm handover is accepted by the next service* — no one is left to navigate alone.
 - **Campus Map (place-based directory):** Strong links to the local *Campus* approach; a clear, printable (black-and-white accessible) map of support that includes statutory, VCSE, faith, peer and community assets. Anchor institutions agree to support smaller orgs to participate and keep entries accurate.
 - **Consent & Information Sharing:** Standard, plain-English consent questions at first contact; share only what’s necessary for a warm handover; record and respect preferences. Include how consent was obtained in the handover.
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2) No Wrong Door Philosophy

Every service is a valid entry point. Staff never end an interaction at “no”; instead they say “*we can’t do X, but here’s what we can do*” and follow the tiered pathway below.

3) Tiered Response Pathway

Tier 1 — Direct Support

If you can help, begin support now or initiate the process (book, refer internally, or start paperwork).

Tier 2 — Warm Handover (with ownership)

If another service is better placed:

1. *Identify* the best-fit service.
2. *Contact* them with the person’s consent.
3. *Confirm acceptance* (time, place, named contact).
4. *Stay responsible* until the receiving service confirms they’ve actively taken over (not just “we emailed them”).

Tier 3 — Alternative Offer (co-produced)

If no immediate service is available, co-produce an Alternative Offer that may include:

- Practical and social support (e.g., food bank, hardship funds, community groups, peer support) and clear directions/images so the person recognises the place.
- Brief information, advocacy, and a *self-help plan* (avoid fostering learned helplessness; the person is their first point of help, with us as supporters).
- A named follow-up (date/time) to check progress or reassess.

4) The Campus Directory (Local + “Rolodex” Knowledge)

- **What it includes:** Local charities, crisis support, community groups, faith initiatives, peer networks, and *local knowledge* (not just formal listings). Where appropriate, add *photos of venues and (consenting) staff* to reduce anxiety and help people recognise where to go.
- **Upkeep and ownership:** Nominate a directory owner/editor, with routine update cycles. Where helpful, integrate or signpost to existing platforms (e.g., Devon Connect / Devon Access to Services / NDVS offers).

5) Equip and Care for Frontline Staff

- **Core skills:** Trauma-informed and strengths-based practice; Non-Violent Communication and de-escalation; “What matters to you?” conversations that identify feelings, needs, and matching services.
 - **Support & supervision:** Regular reflective practice, line supervision, and staff wellbeing measures; clear crisis pathways (e.g., when and how to escalate/999).
 - **Inclusion framework:** Apply inclusive practice learning so people experiencing poverty are not excluded by process or language. Anchor institutions help resource training across the campus.
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6) Accountability, Learning, and Improvement

Track and review:

- Volumes of Tier 1/2/3 responses and *time-to-handover acceptance*.
 - Whether Alternative Offers are made and kept (including follow-ups).
 - Outcomes of warm handovers and any drop-offs (“did the next service actually take ownership?”).
 - User feedback on *felt experience* (was it a **No... but?**) and directory accuracy. Report against Charter commitments and close gaps with targeted improvements (e.g., training, capacity, campus entries).
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7) Embed in Policy, Funding, and Culture

- **Standards & induction:** Make the approach a service standard; build into induction, ongoing training, and supervision. Celebrate and share frontline good practice.
- **Sustainability:** Agree funding and responsibilities for campus/directory maintenance and training; specify anchor-to-VCSE support.