

Service at Revoked or Restricted Addresses — Members Guidance

Member Quick-Reference Summary — understanding the guidance and knowing when to act

This summary is a quick reference only and does not replace the full Members Guidance [CLICK HERE](#).

What it covers

How to serve legal documents at private home addresses where the occupier may have withdrawn permission to approach the door — by signage or in person. It applies to private dwellings and their grounds (drive, path, garden, porch); not commercial premises or public places.

The core legal idea

- Occupiers normally give an implied licence to walk up to the door for ordinary lawful purposes — process service usually falls within it.
- That licence can be revoked by clear signage or in person. Proceeding after revocation makes the operative a civil (not criminal) trespasser — the occupier can sue, but police won't generally arrest.
- Trespass by the server does NOT invalidate otherwise valid service.
- The bigger risk is repeat attendance — it can amount to harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, both a civil and criminal matter, with personal liability for the operative.

Guiding principles

Respect property rights · Prioritise personal safety · Minimise intrusion · Stay calm and courteous · Record everything · Escalate, don't improvise

When to act — Decision Matrix

Situation at the address	Default response
No signage, no prior revocation on file	PROCEED normally — knock, attempt service, record outcome
"No cold callers / canvassers" sign	PROCEED normally — these target marketing, not process service
"No trespassers / Private property" sign	PROCEED WITH CARE, once — obvious path, identify, hand over, leave. Refer to client before re-attending
Sign naming process servers, bailiffs, the firm or a client	DO NOT ENTER — withdraw and consult the client (targeted revocation)
Prior "do not come back" recorded on file	DO NOT ATTEND without express client instruction — default to alternative service
Occupier tells you to leave on arrival	Attempt service at the doorstep if safe, then leave. Do not linger, argue or follow
Locked boundary, no open path to the door	DO NOT climb or unlock — knock at the boundary or withdraw and report

Before & on arrival

- Run a pre-attendance file check for prior signage, refusals, complaints or hostility flags.
- On arrival, read the boundary, all signage (record wording verbatim), CCTV/doorbells, signs of vulnerability and the access route before stepping onto the land.

If you must withdraw — refer to the client in writing

- Record what you encountered, the legal risk, and suggested alternatives: postal service, a CPR 6.15 alternative-service order, service on a solicitor, a different address, or a public handover — then request written instructions.

If the client insists on proceeding

- **Obtain the client's written confirmation AND indemnity (covering trespass / harassment claims) before any further attendance, and save it to the file.**
- No indemnity authorises unlawful conduct: never enter beyond the doorstep, never ignore an instruction to leave, never commit criminal harassment or aggravated trespass. You may decline or withdraw at any time.

Repeat-attendance cap (firms may set)

- One further attempt after a generic sign; none after a targeted sign or an in-person "do not return"; no out-of-hours attendance at flagged addresses.

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