



**UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR
POLICY**

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

Regulation and Legislation	This policy links to or considers: • The Housing Ombudsman Service Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy; • Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code 2024; • Equality Act 2010; • Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED); • The Human Rights Act 1998.
Scope	This policy explains what we consider to be unacceptable behaviour from customers and the approach we will take to look after our customers, employees, contractors, agents and services when presented with this behaviour.
Reference to “we” or “us” includes reference to our group, including any subsidiaries	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to dealing with all feedback, enquiries and service requests efficiently, effectively and always aim to provide the highest level of customer service.
- 1.2 All customers will be dealt with fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately, including those who demonstrate unacceptable behaviour or actions.
- 1.3 We do not view behaviour as unacceptable simply because someone is assertive or determined and recognise that there may be upsetting circumstances leading to an instance of behaviour and people may act out of character. We will be mindful when dealing with customers that their behaviour may be because of circumstances beyond their control and always consider whether any actions we have taken may have contributed to the behaviour.
- 1.4 In some cases the actions of customers who are aggressive, abusive or unreasonably persistent may result in demands or unacceptable behaviour towards our employees, hindering our ability to help them and placing unfair demands on services which could affect the level of service offered to other customers.
- 1.5 We do not tolerate any form of violence or abuse towards employees and expect all customers to display courtesy and respect. Where customer behaviour meets our definition of unacceptable behaviour we will take appropriate action to protect our employees, contractors, agents and services from such behaviour.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Definitions of unacceptable behavior

2.1.1 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Our employees understand the difference between anger and aggression. A customer may feel justifiably angry about an issue, however, it is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression towards employees. Aggression is not restricted to acts that may result in physical harm and also includes behaviour or language (spoken or written) or gestures which may cause an employee to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- threats;
- physical violence;
- hostile, abusive or offensive language;
- derogatory remarks;
- inflammatory statements;
- unsubstantiated allegations; or
- hate speech.

2.1.2 Unreasonable demands

We will consider demands unreasonable if they impact substantially and unreasonably on our resources because of the amount of information sought, the nature and scale of service expected, or the regularity or number of approaches made.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- asking for responses within an unreasonable timescale;
- insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular employee;
- persistent phone calls, emails or letters;
- repeatedly changing the content or issue of a complaint or raising unrelated issues;
- repeatedly requesting services that are opposed to one of our policies; or
- repeatedly raising issues not within our power to investigate or change.

2.1.3 Unreasonable persistence

Customers who continue to pursue an issue, concern or complaint because they will not accept we are unable to help them further (or provide a level of service other than the service already provided) are being unreasonably persistent.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint or enquiry;
- persistently seeking an outcome which we have already explained is unrealistic for policy, legal or other valid reasons;
- continuing to pursue a case without giving any new information; or
- persistent refusal to accept that we are not able to investigate, change or influence certain issues.

2.2 Responding to unacceptable behaviour

2.2.1 We understand that customers may have vulnerabilities which could make it difficult for them to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially if they are anxious or upset. Any concerns that employees may have about vulnerability should be raised in line with our **Safeguarding Policy**. In instances where a customer is identified as being particularly vulnerable, has disabilities or has personal support requirements, we will aim to accommodate these and make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs as set out in our **Additional Assistance and Reasonable Adjustments Policy** and in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010).

2.2.2 We will always try to reach an informal arrangement with customers before taking formal action. We will document and inform customers of our concerns around their behaviour and/or level of contact. We will aim to give customers every opportunity to understand and resolve our concerns.

2.2.3 Our employees will use their judgement in responding to unacceptable behaviour and take immediate action they consider appropriate at the time. This may include:

- informing the customer their behaviour is unacceptable and asking them to adjust their behaviour;
- immediately removing themselves from a situation;
- ending a phone call; or
- not replying to other forms of communication where the contact is considered aggressive, abusive or offensive.

The employee has the right to make the decision, tell the customer the behaviour is unacceptable and end the visit, call or communication.

2.2.4 If this approach fails, a manager will contact the customer to explain what actions we consider unacceptable and why, ask them to change their behaviour, and explain what formal steps may be taken if they do not. Where we have to take action, we will tell the customer in writing what action we are taking and why.

2.2.5 We may offer to meet the customer to discuss the unacceptable actions and agree a way forward. In some cases, it may be appropriate to engage external experts, such as independent mediators, to help us to resolve a situation.

2.3 Formal actions

2.3.1 Formal actions can include, but are not limited to:

- requesting the customer enters into a contact agreement with us;
- providing a single point of contact that all communication must go through;
- limiting contact to one form e.g. writing, email or phone only;
- limiting contact to certain times or to a limited number of times per week or month;
- only taking phone calls at prearranged times;
- requiring a customer to make an appointment to see a named employee;
- prohibiting all direct contact (through all channels) with an individual employee;
- not responding to issues where communication is insulting or abusive;
- only considering a certain number of issues in a specific period;
- not responding to repeated contact on an issue we consider closed;
- prohibiting attendance at our events; or
- blocking access to any of our social media platforms.

2.3.2 Restrictions will not be set indefinitely, and a review period will be agreed with the customer at the outset.

2.3.3 Any restrictions placed on a customer's contact due to unacceptable behaviour will be appropriate to their needs and show regard for the Equality Act 2010 and our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**. We will always maintain at least one form of contact and make provision for the reporting of emergencies.

2.3.4 In extreme cases involving threats, physical violence or harassment towards employees, contractors or agents, actions may include involving the police or taking legal action or ending direct contact with the customer.

2.3.5 If the customer does not keep to any restrictions or contact agreements we may take further action in line with the terms of their tenancy agreement or lease.

2.4 Right to appeal

2.4.1 Customers have the right to appeal a decision to take formal action for unacceptable behaviour. An appeal must be made within 10 working days of the original decision and will be heard by someone not related to the case. We will aim to provide a response to

an appeal within 10 working days, however, if we are unable to do this we will keep the customer updated on timescales.

- 2.4.2 A customer who is unhappy with the outcome of the appeal may raise a formal complaint in accordance with our [Complaints Policy](#).

2.5 Recording and reviewing restricted access decisions

- 2.5.1 We will record all incidents of unacceptable behaviour and decisions to restrict customer contact. Where a customer has been placed under a form of restricted contact due to unacceptable behaviour this will be subject to a periodic review. This will usually take place every three to six months from the date the restriction was applied or before the end of the agreed restriction period. Reviews will not be carried out where a court order has been obtained. The customer has the right to apply to the court directly to revoke or vary the order.

2.6 Support for employees

- 2.6.1 Where employees or contractors experience a specific incident of behaviour from customers that pose a danger or risk to them, an account marker can be requested in line with our [Account Marker Policy](#).
- 2.6.2 To ensure employee wellbeing, a manager will make a wellbeing call as soon as possible to the employee making the request.
- 2.6.3 The call should address the nature and severity of the incident, the impact on the employee's personal wellbeing, whether any additional support is recommended (either through internal or externally provided services), if any adjustments to ways of working are needed and whether time off work for compassionate reasons may be necessary.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Chief Executive and Chair	Monitoring compliance and performance against this policy Considering appeals
Chief Executive	Contacting customers, explaining and agreeing formal actions Approving requests for formal actions

	Contacting staff who have requested an account marker or reported unacceptable behaviour
All staff	Taking appropriate action following incidents of unacceptable behaviour Raising any safeguarding concerns

4. Review

- 4.1 We will carry out a fundamental review of this policy every three years subject to legal, regulatory changes or if internal changes require it.

5. Essential information

- 5.1 All our policies and procedures are developed in line with our approach to the following: data protection statement, equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) approach, complaints policy and our regulatory and legal obligations to ensure we deliver services in a lawful manner and treat people equally and fairly.



Document control

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