

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

October 2022



APPENDIX B

The Council has standards in place in order to maintain a high quality of customer care.

We expect every customer to receive excellent customer service, always serving them with dignity, courtesy and respect, and responding to their individual needs.

At the same time, we expect our employees and elected members to be treated with respect and courtesy. Whilst we understand that people sometimes act out of character in times of anxiety or distress and can become angry and/or frustrated, we will not accept behaviour from customers that is threatening, abusive or unreasonably persistent.

What is Unacceptable Behaviour?

Aggressive or Abusive behaviour which could include:

- Threatening or abusive language
- Derogatory, offensive or rude comments which humiliate, intimidate, frighten or demean employees or other customers
- Unsubstantiated allegations
- Violence or threats of violence

Unreasonable demands which could include:

- Requests for excessive amounts of information
- Setting unreasonable timescales
- Continual insistence on seeing a particular employee
- Continual contact
- Changing the substance of a complaint or introducing unrelated concerns

Unreasonable persistence which could include:

- Refusal to accept a decision
- Refusal to accept explanations of what a service can and cannot do

Assessing Unreasonable Behaviour

Every situation is different, so this policy does not intend to be prescriptive on what should be considered by the council when assessing unreasonable behaviour. Officers will need to use their judgement and skills to assess the situation and need to take into account a wide range of factors which may include:

- The impact of the person's behaviour so far
- The likelihood of behaviour improving if no action is taken
- Whether different responses are likely to improve or escalate a situation
- The opinion of a more senior manager and managers that specialise in customer behaviour

Responding to Unreasonable Behaviour

The following options can be used singularly or as a combination depending on the circumstances of the case:

- Writing to the person to explain how their behaviour is unreasonable and warn them that they need to change their behaviour
- Writing to the person to explain that the Council has done everything it believes is reasonable and that further communication on the same matter serves no further useful purpose, and that the council will no longer engage in further contact on the same matter. In some cases it may be appropriate for the council to provide a reminder of relevant appeals processes
- Banning the person from entering our premises for a period of time
- Declining contact with the person, either in person, by telephone, by letter or by e-mail or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained. We may also put in place a single nominated officer through which all contact with the council must be made.
- Entering information about the person onto the Staff Protection Register. This is described in the Staff Protection (Register) Policy
- Taking legal action against the person which may include use of anti-social behaviour legislation

Related policies

The following policies discuss similar situations and further detail on some of the possible responses:

Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy

Aggressive and Violent Behaviour Policy and Procedure

Staff Protection (Register) Policy