

Behaviour Policy Introduction

1. We are committed to providing an efficient, fair and accessible service to everyone using the Complaints Scheme. We believe that everyone who contacts us has the right to be heard, understood and respected. We must also provide a safe working environment for our staff and ensure the Scheme operates effectively.
2. We recognise that some people may find it difficult to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially when anxious or upset. We also understand that some people may find it difficult to identify the impact of their behaviour on other people. We will always consider making reasonable adjustments for a person living with a disability, formally identified or not, if we are asked to do so - but we may still use this policy if someone's actions or behaviours are having a negative effect on our staff or our work.
3. This policy sets out the kinds of actions and behaviour that may have a negative effect, and what we will do in these circumstances. This may include restricting access to our service in some circumstances. All our staff have the right not to be subjected to aggressive, threatening, offensive or abusive actions, language or behaviour, regardless of the circumstances.
4. The policy applies to everyone who communicates with us, including complainants, their representatives and the regulators.

Examples of actions or behaviour which may have a negative effect on our staff or our work

Aggressive, offensive or abusive actions or behaviour

5. This means any actions or behaviour that could cause staff to feel intimidated, threatened or offended. These include, but are not limited to: threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, and rudeness, whether made to the member of staff directly or elsewhere (including online bullying). Deliberately

provocative or inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can also amount to abusive actions or behaviour.

6. Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language, whether oral or written, that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

Unreasonable demands or persistence

7. This is where a person makes unreasonable demands on us or our staff, or is unreasonably persistent, which may have an impact on our ability to review the person's complaint, or the complaints of other people who are using the Scheme.
8. Examples of unreasonable demands may include: requesting responses within an unreasonable timescale; insisting on speaking to or corresponding with a particular member of staff, frequent phone calls, e-mails, or letters; repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
9. Examples of unreasonable persistence include: continual refusal to accept that a decision has been made in relation to a complaint; insisting that we answer questions when we have done so or explained why we will not; persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what we can or cannot do; sending e-mails to multiple members of staff; or repeatedly trying to revisit a case through our internal processes, once those processes have come to an end.

Our approach

10. When we consider that someone's actions or behaviour are likely to have a negative effect, we will tell them why and we will give them the opportunity to modify their actions or behaviour. If the actions or behaviour continue, we will take steps to prevent or minimise the negative effects. Wherever possible, we will continue with our review of the complaint. We will try to ensure that any action we take is the minimum required to protect our staff and to ensure that they can work effectively.
11. Our staff and representatives may either place a caller on hold or end the telephone call if the caller is aggressive, offensive or abusive, or is making unreasonable demands.
12. It may be necessary to apply restrictions to someone's contact with us. A decision to do this may be taken by the Chief Operating Officer or the Commissioner. Some of the options that we may consider are:
 - 12.1. To restrict or block future contact from a person. For example, we may:

- 12.1.1. Limit the person to making telephone calls on a specified day and time of the week;
- 12.1.2. Require that contact is with a specified member of staff only;
- 12.1.3. Not accept any further telephone calls from the person
- 12.2. Require the person to communicate with us through a representative - or a different representative where it is the representative whose behaviour is causing concern.
- 12.3. Read future correspondence but acknowledge or respond to it only if the person is raising new information or making a new complaint.
- 12.4. Suspend or terminate consideration of a complaint. In exceptional cases, we may also decide not to consider a future complaint from the person. We will consider the impact on them and whether there is a broader public interest in considering the complaint further.
- 12.5. Report the matter to the Police or take legal action. In such cases, we may not give the person prior warning of taking that action.
- 13. We will make a note of any incidents which lead us to act under this policy, and what action we have taken to address the issue.
- 14. Anyone who is unhappy with a decision we have made under this policy may send a complaint to the Commissioner. The complaint will be considered in line with our service complaints policy.

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