



Unacceptable Behaviour Policy May 2023

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This policy applies to Co-op Homes' (CHS) employees, its representatives and contractors; and the residents, client co-operatives and members of the public who interact with CHS employees or its representatives.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy has been produced to make clear the types of behaviour that we consider to be unacceptable or vexatious on the part of residents, clients or members of the public toward our employees, contractors and representatives. It sets out how we will respond to protect the wellbeing of our employees and our ability to provide service to all customers on the rare occasions when people behave in unacceptable ways.
- 1.2 This policy provides a clear framework so that employees can act confidently and in line with our values if they are experiencing unacceptable behaviour from residents, clients or members of the public.

2 What is NOT covered by this policy?

- 2.1 We recognise that when people contact us, they can sometimes feel upset, aggrieved or distressed and may express their concerns in an assertive or angry way. This policy does not seek to avoid those moments.
- 2.2 This policy does, however, seek to ensure that this behaviour does not become a habit, vexatious or damaging to our service or employees.

3 What is unacceptable behaviour?

- 3.1 We consider behaviour to be unacceptable when it is rude, derogatory, intimidating, abusive or unkind and where employees are regularly subject to such behaviour or where unreasonable demands are placed on our employees, potentially to the detriment of other customers.
- 3.2 Unreasonable demands would include repeated or vexatious demands for services that put people under undue pressure to deliver something outside of our remit or control.

3.3 Unacceptable behaviour can happen via any medium, included face-to-face communication, email, letter, telephone, text or social media.

3.4 Unacceptable behaviour includes (but is not limited to):

- i. Threats of any kind
- ii. Verbal abuse
- iii. Any form of physical abuse
- iv. Racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, sectarian or any other discriminatory language
- v. Offensive or abusive language include swearing
- vi. Rudeness
- vii. Inflammatory statements
- viii. Unsubstantiated allegations
- ix. Personal insults or insults about other employees

3.5 Unacceptable vexatious behaviour may include:

- i. A high volume of communication demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale or outside of our service standards.
- ii. Repeatedly contacting us about an issue that has already been decided and where the person has been notified or responded to in previous communication.
- iii. Repeatedly raising issues that have been the subject of a complaint that has been through our full complaints process or where the complaints process has been offered as a route for conclusion of a disputed matter but this offer has not been taken up by the customer, client or member of the public.

4 Initial response to unacceptable behaviour

4.1.1 We expect all our teams and representatives of Co-op Homes to act in a friendly, polite and courteous way when dealing with residents, clients and members of the public and we expect our employees to be treated with equal courtesy. All employees have the right to terminate phone calls or take steps to end face-to-face, email or social media conversations if they are subject to unacceptable behaviour as defined here.

4.1.2 We have zero-tolerance in relation to violence or threats or threatening behaviour against our employees. All employees have the right to terminate contact if they are concerned for their safety or wellbeing at any time.

4.1.3 Training is available to all staff which covers the tools available and skills needed in the management of challenging behaviours by customers.

4.1.4 Where an incident of this nature has occurred, we will communicate with the individual to let them know their behaviour is unacceptable. We will also let them know that we reserve the right to limit the contact or make other reasonable adjustments should the behaviour

continue. We will also take into account any matters which may be contributing to their behaviour and look at appropriate support as part of our response.

- 4.15 At co-op homes we have business to customer relationships i.e. our residents and the residents of the co-ops we deliver services to, and business to business relationships i.e. the co-ops we are in contract with. If we wish to escalate our response, the process for doing so is different for each of these groups.

Serious and/or persistent unacceptable behaviour by a resident

Where a customer's behaviour breaches what is acceptable steps can be taken to control how they contact us. In such circumstances we will consider, but not be limited to the following options:

- Minimising visits within the home – we only attend for urgent or H&S related issues and with a minimum of two people
- Making the household 'do not visit alone' which requires that we visit with a minimum of two people
- Limiting the customer to written only communication i.e. not by phone or in person
- Where the contact is vexatious, changing the service levels that apply e.g. not replying to each email within a set timescale and grouping together emails and providing a consolidated response on an agreed regular basis e.g. weekly or monthly
- Reserving the right not to reply to abusive or threatening emails by giving specific examples of previous behaviour which is not acceptable

In extreme cases of threatening behaviour against an individual, we would explore taking out an injunction and other powers available to us to protect staff.

Following a decision to change contact arrangements, the customer will be written to outlining the restrictions that have been agreed and setting out the timescale during which they will apply. A maximum period of six months will be used but this can be extended following a further review.

Serious and/or persistent unacceptable behaviour by individuals who are representing client organisations

Where it is a business to business relationship, we will not tolerate abusive or threatening behaviour towards an individual or group of individuals in the same way that we would not accept this from a resident.

Our duty is to protect our staff and a panel will be convened (made up of two managers) and they will review any evidence from staff who have contact with the organisation with a view to implementing the following escalation process by starting at the appropriate level:

Level one: We will write or speak to the client to point out to them that their behaviour is unacceptable and provide examples of things they have done which we will not tolerate. They will be given an opportunity to amend their behaviour. The communication should be aimed at re-building the relationship and acknowledge any legitimate cause of frustration and the fact that this can spill over. Any new arrangements will be confirmed in writing.

Level two: Where level one has failed or where an incident is serious enough to warrant a stronger response, we will look to restrict their communication. We may wish to meet them to discuss their behaviour ahead of agreeing steps we will put in place. We will consider, but not be limited to the following options:

- Limit the client to written only communication e.g. via email
- Where the contact is vexatious, changing the service levels that apply e.g. not replying to each email within a set timescale and grouping together emails and providing a consolidated response on an agreed regular basis e.g. weekly or monthly
- Reserving the right not to reply to abusive or threatening emails by giving specific examples of previous behaviour which is not acceptable
- A change in points of contact on either side effectively setting out who is allowed to communicate with who
- Withdrawing the attendance at meetings either in person or online
- Requiring that they take action against their staff to adhere to their own policies e.g. code of conduct

Following the meeting, the client will be written to outlining the restrictions that have been agreed and setting out the timescale during which they will apply. A maximum period of six months will be used but this can be extended following a further review.

Level three: this would generally only be used where level two has failed or the situation is so serious that it warrants legal action. In this situation, the panel would look at the following options:

- Making a permanent change in the way the contract is managed from our side e.g. new points of contact and different working arrangements
- Taking legal action to limit their behaviour
- Informing the Police
- Instigating the alternative dispute resolution process in the Contract
- Re-negotiating the services we will provide
- Serving notice on the client to end the contractual relationship and withdraw our services

5 Equality and Diversity

5.1 Co-op Homes will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently and will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group in line with equality laws and principles.

5.2 We will act sensitively toward the diverse needs of individuals and communities and will take positive action or make reasonable adjustments, where appropriate.

6 Monitoring and Compliance

Incidents of unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour will be regularly reviewed by the Senior Management Team.

7 Confidentiality

Co-op Homes will collect and process data in line with our current Data Protection Policy.

8 Legislation and Regulation

This policy is framed within the context of the following legislation:

- Equalities Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

9 Associated Policies and Procedures

The following procedures are associated with this policy:

- Antisocial behaviour procedure
- Complaints procedure
- Lone worker process

This policy is supported by:

- Antisocial behaviour policy
- Complaints policy
- Management of health and safety at work policy
- Equality and diversity policy
- Data protection policy