

# Unreasonable customer behaviour policy

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Reviewed by	All Team Leaders/Head of Housing
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## 1. Scope of policy

There will be occasions when customers and other correspondents' behaviour toward Cottsway becomes unreasonable. In these situations, there is a risk to the dignity of staff and customers, and for the professionalism and reputation of the organisation. This policy describes the approach we will take in dealing with these rare but evident occasions.

To be effective, the policy needs to be applied with due consideration for the customer and any known vulnerability, their situation at the point of contact, our role and responsibility in that situation (if any), and any earlier engagement.

## 2. Policy statement

This policy sets out what we will do when customers present behaviour that is unreasonable, unduly persistent or occasionally both.

The policy applies to contacts from:

- Current Cottsway customers
- Customers' representatives
- Former customers
- General public

### 2.1 Unreasonable behaviour

We encourage customers to engage with Cottsway when they have a concern, and to give feedback or register a formal complaint, about services provided to them by Cottsway and our contractors. We will provide methods of communication so that they can tell us about their situation in a way that is most convenient to them. We will listen to their concerns and take agreed action as appropriate.

Customers do not have a right to verbally abuse, make threat or undermine the dignity of Cottsway staff or our contractors as they go about their contact with Cottsway.

The types of behaviour that may be unreasonable include, but are not limited to:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour - repeated use of strong or vulgar language (swearing), making threats against an individual or the organisation, language that breaches equality and diversity or which undermines the dignity of staff or contractors
- Unreasonable demands, including access to particular individuals
- Unreasonable persistence, repeated and unwarranted volume of contact by phone, in person, in writing, via social media or by revisiting matters that are exhausted

## **2.2 Persistent behaviour**

Persistence or repeated behaviour deemed unreasonable may be identified as occurring across a number of different contacts or simply within one contact. If strong language is being used and the staff member asks for moderation but is ignored the behaviour can be considered persistent. Repeated individual contacts for the same matter may also be deemed unduly persistent.

## **3. Implementation**

Vulnerabilities and preferences for communication will be recorded on our systems and will be available to relevant staff. Data will be managed according to the terms of our Data Protection Policy.

We recognise that vulnerability covers a wide range of circumstances and that not all customers identified as vulnerable will need access to support services or accept offers of assistance. We will however seek to ensure opportunities for support are provided in an accessible format.

We will publicise our expectation for staff, contractors and representatives of Cottsway to be treated respectfully; on our website, social media, with a notice in our public spaces at Cottsway House, including customer meeting rooms and occasionally in our customer e-zine communication, Homepage.

### **3.1 Identification of incidence**

We rely on staff to make a considered initial judgement whether an incident, in isolation or as a pattern of behaviour, constitutes unreasonable behaviour requiring a formal response. We will provide staff with training to deal with difficult customers or situations.

In the first instance, and within the customer contact, the behaviour may be identified with the customer as unreasonable, provided this does not seek to inflame the situation.

In the case of phone contact, we will, as a part of a controlled call process, terminate the call with appropriate notice to the caller and opportunity for change.

In the case of a home visit, we will advise the customer the visit will be ended, if the behaviour is not modified.

In all cases where a concern for unreasonable behaviour is made it will be reported to a Service Manager for review of the evidence. This may be in the form of call recordings, witnesses to an incident, emails, letters and commentary made on social media.

We will identify any learning that the organisation can benefit from.

### **3.2 Actions**

We will make a full and open entry on our system describing the behaviour and any immediate action taken. This will include circumstances leading to the behaviour for which we may have some responsibility. Calls are recorded.

We will seek to resolve any matters identified as needing action and that are reasonable despite an unreasonable method of reporting.

We will be mindful of the individual presenting the behaviour, for potential vulnerability and for safeguarding, and will act accordingly.

We will put a warning indicator against the file record to alert staff and contractors who may come into contact with the perpetrator in the course of their work. The customer will be notified in writing of this action. There will be a review period for the warning indicator and should it be removed or extended we will notify the customer.

### **3.3 Customer engagement**

Where unreasonable behaviour has been found we will notify the person in writing with specific details of the behaviour, including the date, time and method of the incidence. We will identify what needs to change in the behaviour and any consequences if change does not happen.

We may provide information about other sources of personal support, as appropriate.

We will inform the customer of any measures put in place that are particular to their engagement with Cottsway. This may include temporary rules for engagement; a single point of contact, a limitation on contact, a particular expectation for response or a particular method of communication.

We will provide information about appealing a decision to manage their engagement in a particular way. We will work positively with an authorised third-party to find resolution.

We will document contact to make information available to all staff who manage relationships with customers from across the business.

## **4. Appeals**

Appeals against this policy will be addressed through our Complaints Procedure.

## **5. Responsibility**

The Head of Housing has overall responsibility for this policy.

## **6. Monitoring**

All cases carrying a warning flag will be monitored and routinely reviewed by the Neighbourhood Housing Manager.

## **7. Equality, diversity and inclusion**

We are committed to ensuring equality of access to services across the diverse communities in which we work. We will provide information in a range of formats and languages to ensure that

our services are accessible to people from all backgrounds and abilities. This policy aligns with Cottsways equality, diversity and inclusion principles.

### **Other related documents**

- Warning flags
- Complaints policy
- Safeguarding adults, children and young people policies
- Cottsway vulnerable tenants policy

### **Changes to policy**

Change	Date
3.0 (Para 3) Clearer expectations publicised in a variety of mediums, including website and social media platforms	January 2021
3.1 (Para 4) Inclusion of action at home visits	January 2021