Unacceptable Behaviours Policy

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Owner: Governance & Legal
Unacceptable Behaviours Policy

1. Policy Aims

To ensure that our effectiveness in carrying out our business as a Public Authority is not compromised by customers who act in a manner which makes excessive and unacceptable demands on our resources.

We are committed to providing a complaints process that is accessible to all. This Policy sets out our approach to those relatively few customers whose actions or behaviour we consider unacceptable. The term ‘customer’ includes anyone acting on behalf of a customer or anyone who contacts the Park Authority in connection with a complaint.

2. Defining Unacceptable Actions

We define unacceptable actions under three broad headings:

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

This could include:
- Threatening or abusive language, verbally or in written communications of any kind, including social media
- Derogatory or rude comments
- Unsubstantiated allegations
- Physical aggression

Unreasonable demands

This could include:
- Requests for excessive amounts of information [taking into account the provisions of Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002]
- Setting unreasonable time-scales
- Continual insistence on seeing a particular member of staff
- Continual contact
- Changing the substance of a complaint or introducing unrelated concerns

Unreasonable persistence

This could include:
- Refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint
- Refusal to accept explanations of what a service area can and cannot do
- Continuing to pursue a complaint without presenting any new information
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3. Managing unacceptable actions by complainants

The following courses of action are available to staff who encounter unacceptable behaviour:

- Politely and in a professional manner –
  - Requesting that the customer restrict the number of issues raised or requesting greater focus to the complaint
  - Restricting the times or ways in which a customer may make contact
  - Requiring the customer to make an appointment
  - Refusing to deal with correspondence that is abusive or makes unsubstantiated allegations
  - Requiring future contact to be made through a third party
  - Ending telephone calls if a caller is considered aggressive

In all cases, the customer should be told what action we are taking and why.

A customer’s actions may be considered unreasonably persistent if all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted and the customer continues to dispute a decision relating to the issue they have raised.

The customer should be told:

- No future phone calls will be accepted or interviews granted concerning this issue.
- Any future contact on the issue must be in writing.
- Future correspondence is read and filed, but only acknowledged or responded to if the customer provides significant new information relating to the issue.

4. Deciding to restrict contact

With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact are taken by an appropriate Head of Service/Executive in consultation with the Information Officer. Customers are told in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place. A Head of Service can review this decision at their discretion.

5. Appealing a decision to restrict contact

A customer can appeal to the Director of Corporate Services concerning a decision to restrict contact. A representative of the Director of Corporate Services who was not involved in the original decision would consider the appeal. They will advise the customer in writing that either the restricted contact arrangements still apply or a different course of action has been agreed.
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6. Policy review

This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Information Officer to make sure that its aims are being achieved.