



Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

1. Introduction.

- 1.1. This Policy sets out LRHA's approach to deal with whose actions or behaviours we consider unacceptable or unreasonable and aims to provide guidelines to deal with such actions and behaviours and ensure residents are clear in relation to expectations.
- 1.2. LRHA is committed to dealing with all residents fairly ensuring our services are accessible. Residents who act unreasonably can require a disproportionate amount of resources and in turn this could impact on the ability to deliver effective services.
- 1.3. To ensure our staff and partners feel safe to carry out their day-to-day duties and to underpin our health and safety arrangements. Unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour towards our staff and partners will be classified as anti-social behaviour and deemed a potential breach of tenancy terms.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This Policy aims to ensure the steps we take to address instances of unacceptable behaviour are proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the circumstances arising. We retain the right to restrict or change access to our services or determine how an individual can access these.
- 2.2. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for approving and monitoring the application of this Policy, and the overall responsibility for its uses. In practice they may delegate this specific action to the relevant member of the Leadership Team.
- 2.3. This Policy aims to complement LRHA's Complaints Policy. In accordance with these we will always do our best to resolve any dissatisfaction that a resident may express about our action or lack of action, or about standards of service they receive from us.
- 2.4. We do not view complaints in themselves as unacceptable and indeed recognise their value in helping us improve our services. We will offer all complainants an equal right to be heard, understood, and respected. It is the way in which an individual communicates with us in relation to a complaint however, that may be considered as unacceptable behaviour.

3. Defining Unacceptable Actions

- 3.1. People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. For example, they may have faced upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because an individual is forceful or determined in their approach to us. However, the actions of residents who are angry, demanding or exceptionally persistent may result in unreasonable demands being placed on our time and resources or unacceptable behaviour being directed towards staff. It is these actions that we consider unacceptable and aim to manage under this Policy. We group these actions under three broad headings.

4. Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour.

4.1. We understand that residents may have genuine cause to be angry, if for example they feel we have failed to meet their expectations or caused them unnecessary difficulties. We consider it unacceptable however, if that anger escalates into aggression towards staff. Aggression can include physical acts of violence that may result in harm or injury. It also includes behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

4.2. Examples of aggressive behaviour can include:

- Threats
- Physical violence
- Personal abuse
- Derogatory or discriminatory remarks
- Rudeness or belittling remarks
- Inflammatory statements
- Unsubstantiated allegations
- Raised voices and shouting
- Making a threat to commit physical or criminal damage
- Unreasonably restricting access to allow LRHA staff to carry out their housing management or repair duties.

4.3. We will not tolerate any form of violence or abuse towards staff and expect all residents to display courtesy and respect.

4.4. We will remove, without notice, offensive or abusive posts from our social media channels. This includes posts that contain swearing or libellous statements. Additionally, we reserve the right to take the appropriate legal action we consider necessary in cases where social media platforms or other websites have been used to make derogatory comments about staff or have been used to perpetrate/encourage aggression and/or abuse towards any member of LRHA staff.

4.5. Staff will end telephone calls if they consider the caller is being aggressive, abusive, or offensive. This includes the use of foul language. The staff member taking the call has the right to make this decision and will advise the caller appropriately that if they do not change their behaviour the call will end.

4.6. Depending on the nature and severity of the written or verbal comments the matter may be referred to the police. We may also require future contact to be through a third party.

4.7. In all cases where aggressive or abusive behaviour is experienced, we will record relevant details on our contact management system. This will include an appropriate level of factual information about spoken words and physical actions. As far as possible the outcome of the contact should also be recorded.

4.8. LRHA incoming and outgoing calls are recorded for quality assurance and training purposes, these recordings may be used to support a claim of aggressive or abusive behaviour.

5. Unreasonable Demands

5.1. Individuals may make what we consider unreasonable demands on staff, as a result of the amount of information or assistance they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect or the levels of contact they make or maintain with us. Identifying demands as unreasonable is dependent on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour. It may also, for example, depend on the seriousness of the issues raised through a complaint.

5.2. Examples of actions grouped under this heading include repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, continual telephone calls, letters, emails, text messages and social media posts, or repeatedly raising unsubstantiated complaints.

5.3. We consider these demands as unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work of staff, including taking up an excessive amount of time to the disadvantage of other residents.

6. Unreasonable Persistence

6.1. We recognise that some residents will not or cannot accept that we are unable to meet their demands or provide a level of service other than that provided already. Others may persist in disagreeing with a decision we have taken. This may result in the same issue being raised with us repeatedly, or persistent requests regarding the same matter.

6.2. Examples of actions grouped under this heading include persistent refusal to accept a decision made, persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what we can or cannot do or accept the reasonableness of our published timescales, and continuing to pursue a complaint or other matter without presenting any new information. The way in which these residents approach us may be entirely reasonable, but their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so is not.

6.3. We consider these demands as unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work of staff, including taking up an excessive amount of time to the disadvantage of other service users.

7. Managing Unacceptable Actions

7.1. We anticipate that residents displaying unacceptable behaviour or actions will be a relatively rare occurrence. Nonetheless, we will ensure all staff are appropriately trained and equipped to deal with situations they may find themselves in. This will include providing periodic reminders about this policy; and may also involve arranging bespoke customer service courses in accordance with identified needs.

- 7.2. We will also have information sharing arrangements in place with contractors. Where necessary and appropriate we will advise them of known risks, including vulnerable or potentially volatile residents, and residents that must be visited in pairs. Likewise, we will ask that they inform us of any unacceptable behaviour that they encounter while acting on our behalf.
- 7.3. Our response to unacceptable behaviour, including incidents reported by staff and contractors will vary on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature, extent, and impact of the behaviour. It can also vary according to the relationship an individual has with us. For example, where the customer is a resident, we are able to consider the extent to which tenancy conditions have been breached and follow the prescribed course of action. In all cases however, the following guiding principles will be used to help us decide on an appropriate means of handling the situation.

8. Deciding to Restrict Contact

- 8.1. Staff who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from an individual have the authority to deal with that behaviour in a professional manner in line with this Policy and the Code of Conduct. This can include politely terminating a telephone call; ending a face-to-face discussion or interview; withdrawing their services or generally removing themselves from the situation. The staff member should then notify their Line Manager of the situation.
- 8.2. Where there is a situation where abusive or aggressive behaviour is taking place a member of the Leadership Team can temporarily restrict contact and inform the resident why this decision has been made; and that a record of the incident, decision, evidence and actions will be presented to the Chief Executive or in their absence the Deputy Chief Executive, to verify the decision and the permanence of the restriction to contact.
- 8.3. In the event of unreasonable persistence or unacceptable actions, evidence will be compiled by the Resident Engagement Manager and/or the Property Maintenance Manager and considered by the Leadership Team and presented to the Chief Executive or in their absence the Deputy Chief Executive, to decide on an appropriate means of handling the situation, and where necessary verify the decision and the permanence of the restriction to contact.
- 8.4. With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact with us will only be taken after careful consideration of the situation by the relevant member of the Leadership Team.
- 8.5. Wherever possible, we will give the individual an opportunity to modify their behaviour or action before a decision is taken. Individuals will be 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.

8.6. They will similarly be advised that we will review our decision as and when they demonstrate a more acceptable approach. We will record all decisions to restrict contact, and any associated conditions or arrangements, in our contact management system.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

9.1. We are committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of their colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.

9.2. We will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will adapt our process or make reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individual's needs wherever possible and reasonable.

10. Monitoring and Review

10.1. LRHA will record and monitor every incident of unacceptable behaviour and seek to find solutions that meet resident expectations.

10.2. Feedback will be used to:

- 10.2.1. Report on performance to residents, staff, and Board.
- 10.2.2. Engage with and involve residents in shaping services.
- 10.2.3. Review policies and procedures.
- 10.2.4. Develop the capabilities of staff.

10.3. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years. A review may be conducted earlier if there are significant changes to either legislation or LRHA's operating practices.

11. Associated Documents/ Policies

11.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- 11.1.1. Anti-social Behaviour Policy.
- 11.1.2. Complaints Handbook (to be developed).
- 11.1.3. Complaints Policy.
- 11.1.4. Complaints Procedure Flowchart.
- 11.1.5. Communications Plan (to be developed).
- 11.1.6. Resident Service and Involvement Strategy (to be developed).
- 11.1.7. Social Media Strategy (to be developed).
- 11.1.8. Together with Tenants Charter.

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