

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

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Policy Owner	Tenancy Services Manager	
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Department/Section	Community Services	
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1 Introduction

Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) is committed to providing high quality services which meet the needs of customers. We aim to be open and accessible to everyone and to make every customer interaction the best experience that we can make it.

Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of customers using CBH services makes it very difficult for us to deal with their contact, including complaints. In a small number of cases the actions of customers become unacceptable because they involve abuse of staff or processes.

When this happens, we must take action to protect the health and wellbeing of staff who have a right to do their jobs without fear of being abused or harassed. We also consider behaviour that results in unacceptable or excessive demands on services and impacts on our ability to do the work and provide a service to other customers.

2 Purpose

This policy describes unacceptable behaviour and explains how we will respond. The policy applies to all service areas and to all methods of contact including telephone, face-to-face, letters, e-mails, social media, and other digital channels.

3 Unreasonable Behaviour

3.1 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We understand that some customers may be upset and angry about the issues they are contacting CBH about, including complaints. If that anger escalates into aggression towards a member of staff, CBH consider that unacceptable. Any violence or abuse towards staff will not be tolerated.

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

Unacceptable behaviour is that which:

- is offensive, derogatory, or threatening.
- is discriminatory in any way, including racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic comments; or
- makes serious allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt, or perverse conduct without any evidence.

3.2 Harassment

Staff have the right to carry out their duties free from harassment or threats of harassment. We ask all customers to respect that staff are delivering services and communicating decisions on behalf of CBH.

Examples of behaviours we consider to be harassment against staff include:

- recording telephone discussions and publishing the information online such as through YouTube or Twitter.
- contacting staff using their personal details or social media presence such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.
- publishing personal, sensitive, or private information about staff online or other public domains such as noticeboards or newsletters.
- Arranging for representatives of the media to attend meetings arranged by CBH without our express permission being granted in advance.

3.3 Unreasonable demands

A demand becomes unreasonable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on the work of CBH services.

Examples of this behaviour include:

- Refusing to accept a decision where explanations for the decision have been provided. (Tenants can challenge a decision through the CBH complaints process and refer a decision to the Housing Ombudsman)
- Repeatedly demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale, outside of service level agreements
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible.
- Repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- Making repeated and unnecessary contact while we are dealing with a contact or complaint,
- Repeated telephone calls over a short period, for example, a high number calls in one day or week,
- Lengthy telephone calls repeating the same points of discussion,
- High volumes of information provided by email or post referencing the same issues,
- Unnecessarily or excessive copying us into emails to other parties.
- Approaching or contacting staff outside of work

4. Refusal to cooperate

When we are responding to a contact or investigating a complaint, we will need to ask the individual to work with us. This can include agreeing:

- the scope of the complaint
- to provide us with further information or evidence on request, or
- help us by summarising the concerns.

Sometimes, an individual repeatedly refuses to co-operate, and this makes it difficult for us to proceed. We will seek to assist someone if they have a specific, genuine difficulty in complying with a request.

However, we consider it is unacceptable to bring a contact or complaint to us and then not respond to clear and appropriate requests.

5 Reasonable Adjustments

We understand that some customers may find it difficult to express themselves or communicate clearly and may need assistance. To make any reasonable adjustments, we ask that customers explain their requirements and how this will ensure they can access CBH services.

We will always consider making reasonable adjustments for a customer if we are asked to do so. Examples of adjustments we can consider are:

- We will consider using different methods of communication.
- Providing written communication in large print, coloured text, or in translation.
- Giving clear warnings if conversations become unproductive and allowing customers the opportunity to modify their behaviour before ending a call.
- Advising the customer to use an existing support provider or advocate so that a customer can request services or question decisions, through their representative, in a more reasonable manner.

We may still use this policy if there are actions or behaviours which are having a negative effect on staff or work, even where a reasonable adjustment has been made.

6 Actions that we may take.

When we experience behaviour or demands which are unacceptable, we may consider taking further action. The actions we will consider can include the following:

- Ending phone conversations, office interviews or visits to tenants at any point, if staff feel unsafe.
- Warning the customer about their behaviour and requesting that the customer modifies their behaviour in future contact with us.

- Appointing a specific point of contact for the customer at CBH
- Limiting methods of communication for example contact only to be in writing or via a representative.
- Deciding not to investigate a complaint on the basis that it has been pursued in a way that is unacceptable.
- Adding a customer to our staff personal safety register (SPSR) and adopting measures such as not attending CBH offices or home visits being conducted in pairs.
- In exceptional circumstances, taking legal action and notify relevant public authorities.

When it is decided that action must be taken to manage someone's behaviour, we will inform the customer of the decision in writing and clearly state any review period. An alert will be placed on their tenancy and /or property record to reflect the action taken.

7 Appealing Our Actions

Customers have the right to appeal the decision to restrict their contact with CBH and will be informed how to do this in writing.

The customer can lodge an appeal within 10 working days of our decision to restrict their contact. This appeal can be made verbally or made in writing. The appeal will be heard by a member of staff unconnected to the matter, and of the same level or senior to the original decision maker. The customer will be notified in writing of the outcome of their appeal.

8 Research

Housing Ombudsman – Complaints Handling Code (03/2022)

Housing Ombudsman – Unacceptable behaviour guidance (06/2021)

9 Monitoring and Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with the annual assessment of the Complaints Handling Code, or sooner in the event of any relevant legislative changes.