

Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

Introduction

At Citizen we believe that home is our foundation for life. We build relationships with our customers based on transparency, fairness and respect so we can deliver the services they need.

This policy sets out our approach to dealing with situations where customers actions or behaviour are considered unacceptable and are having (or may have the potential) a harmful impact on our people and/or our ability to provide a consistent level of service.

We expect customers to treat Citizen colleagues and contractors with respect and courtesy. However, occasionally we will need to put steps in place to manage the few customers who may act in an unacceptable manner so we can protect our colleagues, and the services provided to our customers.

If we fall short of service delivery standards, our customers have the right to be heard, understood, and be confident that they can raise their concerns with us. Should any customer have cause to complain about a Citizen colleague this can be done through our complaints process.

The purpose of this Policy is to help manage occasions where customers behaviour becomes unacceptable or unreasonable.

We understand that unreasonableness can be subjective to every individual and we will consider the experience and individual needs of the customer including vulnerabilities or disabilities when making decisions on when to implement this policy. We will also consider whether a customer requires any reasonable adjustments to access our services. The reporting individual will discuss with the line manager and agree approach to ensure mitigation and subjectivity.

This Policy has been framed within the context of appropriate legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and The Human Rights Act 1998, as well as the various tenancy, license and lease agreements which clearly set out our, and our customers responsibilities.

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1. Scope

This policy defines unacceptable behaviour as customers who;

- make unacceptable or excessive demands
- refuses to co-operate
- are unreasonably persistent
- refuse to accept the outcome of a complaint that has exhausted the complaint process and continue to pursue their complaint or issue in a persistent, vexatious, or unacceptable manner
- display aggressive and abusive behaviour
- threaten or harass employees

This Policy applies to any occasion when a customer contacts Citizen.

The Policy applies to unacceptable behaviour taking including place face to face, over the phone, online or via social media, or at the customer's home, on-site.

A customer is defined as a Citizen tenant, licensee, leaseholder or freeholder and any member of their family or someone acting on their behalf. It applies where the behaviour or actions of customers using our service is impacting the wellbeing of our colleagues and our ability to do our work and/or provide a service to others.

Citizen colleagues include Board members, consultants, contractors, and any agents working on behalf of or with Citizen.

Responsibilities for behaviour apply to customers, their relatives, friends and any other person living in or visiting the home, including children and pets.

2. Policy detail

2.1 What we consider as unacceptable behaviour

2.1.1 Unacceptable or excessive demands

Customers may make what are considered as unacceptable demands on the amount of information they seek, the nature and scale of service that they expect, or the number of approaches that they make with regards to a single issue. What amounts to unacceptable demands will always depend on the individual circumstances and the nature of the issues raised by the customer.

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However, customers that take a disproportionate amount of resources may be subject to consequences of the unreasonably persistent contact procedure.

Examples of unacceptable demands include;

- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular colleague and nobody else
- Refusal to speak to, or deal with colleagues
- Not allowing opportunity or the time to resolve the issue when clear timescales have been provided in accordance with our procedures
- Disproportionate number of contacts by phone, emails, letters, or visits to office
- Repeatedly changing the substance of the enquiry
- Refusing to accept a decision where explanations for the decision have been provided

2.1.2 Unacceptable and persistent levels of contact

Some customers will not accept that we are unable to assist them further or provide a level of service they expect. Customers may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken and contact us persistently about the same issue.

Examples of unacceptable persistence include;

- Refusal to accept a decision made where explanations for the decision have been provided, and the customer has exhausted the complaints process
- Refusal to accept explanations relating to what can or can't be done
- Refusal to take ownership or responsibility that would assist Citizen to solve the issue – for example, refusal to complete diary sheets
- Extremely excessive (multiple times per day to multiple colleagues or contacting officers directly outside of usual working hours) contact that prevents us from being able to provide our services
- Contact while we are in the process of considering a matter
- 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

2.1.3 Unacceptable use of the complaints and review processes

Customers with complaints about a service delivered by a colleague or contractor acting on our behalf or a decision made by us, has the right to pursue their concerns through our complaints policy. They also have the right to complain more than once if subsequent incidents occur.

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If the number of complaints becomes excessive as defined in our complaints policy this can become unreasonable. When the effect of the repeated complaints is to harass, or to prevent an organisation from pursuing a legitimate aim, or implementing a legitimate decision, this is unacceptable. We consider access to a complaints system to be important and it will only be in exceptional circumstances that we would consider such repeated use as unreasonably persistent – but we reserve the right to do so in such cases.

2.1.4 Aggressive and abusive behaviour

Examples of unacceptable behaviours are but not excluded to;

- Personal verbal abuse, including excessive swearing
- Threatening or aggressive behaviour
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour
- Offensive gestures
- Discriminatory language
- Unsubstantiated allegations
- Personal attacks on social media or other digital channels
- Preventing a colleague from leaving a premises or refusing to leave one of our offices, facilities or events
- Recording of Citizen colleagues or contractors without consent
- recording telephone discussions and publishing the information online such as through YouTube, Vimeo 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

Any resident or member of the household or visitor to the property who has been aggressive, abusive, violent or has displayed threatening behaviour and who is believed to present a current risk to the safety of our staff, contractors or others, can be considered to be potentially violent. Where necessary the customer account will be updated with a potential violent (PV) marker to alert colleagues to any potential risk. There are guidance notes to support managing this process on One Place.

2.2 Raising awareness of how we manage unacceptable behaviour

A copy of this Policy is available on request and is published on our website.

Where relevant, colleagues will make customers aware of this policy, the procedures that support it and the possible impacts on them should their behaviour be judged to be unreasonable.

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Citizen will ensure that contractors and individuals working with or on behalf of Citizen are aware of this Policy.

2.3 Managing unacceptable behaviour

We will work with other organisations where necessary to support customers identified as needing additional support and if appropriate, customers will be signposted to our Tenancy Sustainment Team or signposting to external organisations. Only after these options have been exhausted, will we consider putting restrictions on customer contact.

How we choose to manage unacceptable behaviour is dependent upon the nature and extent of an individual's actions.

If the unacceptable behaviour persists following the steps set out in our procedure, we may:

- issue a letter to advise that we are considering using our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.
- provide a single contact
- require the customer to make appointments to see a named colleague before visiting the office
- require the customer to communicate in writing only (unless reporting an emergency repair or enquiry)
- require contact to be via a third party
- require the customer to only contact us once in a month unless reporting an emergency
- warning the customer about their behaviour and requesting that the customer modifies their behaviour in future contact with us
- restrict or limit contact

If any restrictions are applied, customers will be informed of what these restrictions are and their duration - in writing. This is with the exception of incidents that require immediate action, decisions to restrict contact will only be taken in line with our procedures.

Should restrictions to contact be applied, it will be done so ensuring that customers will still be able receive services from us and maintain at least one form of contact with us except in extreme situations where contact will be through a third party.

We may offer to meet the customer to discuss their behaviour to reach agreement on a way forward, and if necessary, to enable resolution, will engage with external experts, such as independent mediators.

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If we consider an issue has been fully responded to and that the continuation of correspondence serves no purpose, the customer will be advised that future correspondences on the matter will be filed but not responded to unless there is a significant update that requires action.

2.4 How long restrictions remain in force

We will review the status of any customers with restricted contact arrangements every six months in line with our procedures and reconsider decisions, easing or lifting restrictions if customers demonstrate changed behaviour. We may consider a secondary review of the decision to invoke the Policy. Any outcome that includes a restriction to the way that the customer can contact us will have a review period decided on a case-by-case basis.

3. Our colleagues

We recognise that colleagues who have experienced unacceptable behaviour from customers may feel worried or upset.

We will provide support to colleagues including; support from their line manager, HR, mental health first aiders or our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or tailored support.

4. Appeals

Customers are able to appeal a decision to restrict their contact by using our complaints procedure. The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt and a written response will be provided within ten working days.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Colleagues are responsible for ensuring that they report incidents of unacceptable behaviour by customers, discuss this with their line manager and record it on our CRM.

If necessary, potentially violent (PV) markers can be placed against the customer to inform colleagues and will be managed through our PV marker process. Colleagues should check the system for any PV markers relating to an address they are visiting.

Line Managers are responsible for deciding how to manage any restrictions put in place and communicating this to the customer.

A panel of colleagues are responsible for reviewing restricted access with customers.

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6. Policy Governance

It is the responsibility of the Board to seek assurance that this Policy is successfully implemented. The Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this Policy and that all colleagues understand the importance of this Policy, the related procedures and that they comply with them.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that their team have undertaken the appropriate Policy eLearning and training,

Any changes to this Policy must be made in line with the requirements set out in Citizens Standing Orders and our Policy framework.

7. Monitoring and review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years (with an interim review at 12-18 months), unless legislation, service delivery or regulatory developments require otherwise, ensuring the policy continues to meet its objectives and take account of good practice developments.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

This policy has been subject to an equality analysis. Colleagues working across Citizen have considered the impact of this Policy on different groups and communities that we work with. In framing this policy, our colleagues are committed to not discriminate adversely against any group and will respect the diversity of the communities we are working within.

9. Version control

VERSION	DATE	AMENDMENTS	APPROVED AT/BY	NEXT REVIEW
V1.0	Feb 2022	New policy	Citizen Board – Feb 2022 Customer Assurance Committee Jan 2022	Feb 2025
V2.0	May 2022	Light touch review. Clarity over examples of unacceptable behaviour.		
V3.0	March 2025	Full 3 year review	Name changed from 'unreasonably persistent contact' to 'unacceptable behaviour'. Behaviours have been brought into the policy.	February 2028
V4.0	May 2025	Correction of grammatical errors	Policy and Strategy Analyst	February 2028

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