

Acceptable Behaviour Policy

Revised November 2025, updating and replacing the policy and procedure developed in 2011.

1. Introduction

The Council is committed to providing high-quality services to all residents. We believe that everyone has the right to be heard, understood, and respected. Equally, our staff have the right to work in a safe and respectful environment, free from abuse, harassment, or unreasonable demands.

This policy applies to all customers of Croydon council. A 'customer' is defined as anyone who lives in or visits one of our homes, receives a service from us, including residents, clients of our community services and members of the public.

This policy outlines the standards of behaviour expected from residents when interacting with the Council and the steps we may take when behaviour becomes unacceptable.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote respectful and constructive communication between residents and council staff.
- Protect staff from abusive, aggressive, or unreasonable behaviour.
- Ensure that council resources are used effectively and fairly.
- Provide a clear framework for managing unacceptable behaviour.

3. What Constitutes Unacceptable Behaviour

The Council has a zero-tolerance policy towards threatening or prejudicial behaviour towards any staff member. Unacceptable behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- Aggressive or abusive language or conduct, including shouting, swearing, threats, or personal insults.
- Unreasonable demands, such as expecting immediate responses to complex queries or excessive contact that disrupts service delivery, the volume of information they request or the frequency of their enquiries.
- Refusal to cooperate with council processes or staff instructions.

- Harassment or bullying of staff, including repeated complaints with minor variations intended to prolong engagement.
- Disruptive behaviour in council buildings or during phone/email interactions.
- Excessive communication, via any method, including apps Recording phone calls or meetings without staff consent and/or publishing the information online on social media channels.
- Verbal or physical threats that can make staff feel scared, threatened or abused.
- Harassment, including any behaviour that demeans, embarrasses, humiliates or annoys a person. This includes words, gestures, intimidation, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour.
- Racist or sexist language
- Having insufficient or no grounds for their complaint and making the complaint only to annoy (or for reasons that he or she does not admit or make obvious).
- Refusal to specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance.
- Refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refusal to accept that issues are not within the remit of the complaints policy and procedure or within the power of the Council to change or influence, despite having been provided with information about the scope of the policy and procedure (e.g. complaints about parking tickets or planning appeals).
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice, for example, insisting that there must not be any written record of the complaint.
- Making what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaints, and seeking to have them dismissed or replaced.
- Making persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of staff and/or the complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant
- Raising subsidiary or new issues whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information whilst the complaint is being investigated and expecting this to be taken into account and commented on.
- Changing the substance or basis of the complaint without reasonable justification whilst the complaint is being addressed.

- Adopting an excessively 'scattergun' approach, for instance, by pursuing the same complaint or complaints with various officers of the Council, at the same time as with a Member of Parliament, elected councillors and/or other external bodies, as a result of which the Council has to use multiple resources in order to deal with enquiries, when resources could be better used to investigate and respond to the original complaint.
- Continuing to argue the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.
- Making the same complaint repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, after the complaints procedure has been concluded, and insisting that the minor differences make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure or persistently approaching the Council through different routes about the same issue.
- Persisting in seeking an outcome which we have explained is unrealistic for legal or policy (or other valid) reasons.
- Complaining about or challenging an issue based on a historic and irreversible decision or incident.
- Persistently arguing the same point, asking us to change records, information or decisions when we have already explained our position.

This list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the person will be considered as being in this category.

We recognise that individuals may behave out of character during times of trouble or distress. There may be upsetting or distressing circumstances that lead to someone contacting us, and they may be (whether justified or not) angry with us. We do not consider behaviour unacceptable solely because someone is angry, forceful, determined or challenging.

However, the actions of customers who are persistently angry, demanding, aggressive, insulting or intimidating can create unreasonable demands on our staff and contractors, and cause them distress. It is these actions that we consider unacceptable and aim to manage under this policy.

4. Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

When behaviour is deemed unacceptable, the Council may take proportionate and tailored actions. These actions will be considered based on their nature and severity. Actions that can be taken are, but not limited to:

- Limiting contact to a specific communication method (e.g., written correspondence only).
- Restricting contact to certain times or days.
- Assigning a single point of contact within the Council.
- Requiring the use of an advocate or representative.
- Banning access to council buildings or services (e.g., libraries, leisure centres) except by appointment.
- Restricting contact available i.e blocking an email address from contacting the Council
- Ending telephone calls
- Not responding to any abusive, offensive or threatening correspondence

Any restrictions that are considered will be on a case by case basis, taking into consideration whether they are current Social Care service users, and we will strive to do this in a manner that allows customers to report everyday issues, such as repairs or missed bin collections. Any reasonable adjustments that a customer has in place will also be considered as part of the decision making process.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council has the right to consider an open ended ban and report incidents to the Police.

5. Decision-Making and Review Process

Decisions to restrict contact will be made by the Corporate Complaints Manager, in consultation with the Head of Resident Contact and relevant service directors.

In most cases, a warning will be provided to the customer to advise them that we consider their behaviour to be unacceptable. A request should be made for them to modify their unacceptable behaviour. In more severe cases, a warning may not be issued.

A written explanation will be provided to the individual, including:

- Details of the restriction that has been put in place.
- The reason for the decision.
- The duration of the restriction

- The right to appeal.
- The date of review (typically after twelve months).
- All decisions will be recorded and reviewed regularly to ensure fairness and compliance with legal obligations.

6. Equality, Diversity and Vulnerability Considerations

The Council recognises that some individuals may display challenging behaviour due to specific circumstances, such as mental health issues or other vulnerabilities. In such cases:

- Staff will consider reasonable adjustments.
- The use of advocates may be encouraged.
- Concerns will be escalated to the Head of Service for appropriate support.

7. Links to Other Policies

- This policy aligns with:
 - Equalities Strategy 2023-2027
 - Red File Scheme (for recording abusive or violent behaviour)
 - Code of Conduct
 - Complaints Policy and Procedure

8. Contact Information

For further information or support, please contact:

Complaint Resolution Team
Email: complaints@croydon.gov.uk

Local Government Ombudsman
Website: www.lgo.org.uk
Phone: 0300 061 0614

Policy due for revision: January 2027