

CROYDON COUNCIL HOUSING

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy



This policy was reviewed with the help of Croydon Housing Residents

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We take pride in maintaining an open and honest relationship with our customers and strive to be proactive and responsive to their enquiries and complaints. However, there are instances when customers may act in ways that hinder our ability to provide effective service. In such cases, we will take necessary actions to protect the health and well-being of our staff, who have the right to perform their duties without fear of abuse or harassment. Croydon Council will not tolerate violent, aggressive, or intimidating behaviour towards our staff, board members, contractors, or representatives from any individuals or groups using our services.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all customers of Croydon Council. A 'customer' is defined as anyone who lives in or visits one of our homes or receives a service from us, including residents, clients of our community services, and members of the public.
- 1.3 This policy enables us to manage unacceptable customer behaviour in a consistent and fair manner. It clearly outlines what we consider to be unacceptable behaviour and the steps we may take to address it.
- 1.4 Examples of unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to:
 - Using abusive or foul language directed at staff
 - Using language or behaviours directed at staff that are discriminatory
 - Physical, psychological, or verbal threats towards staff
 - Making continued, unsubstantiated allegations against staff
 - Harassment of staff using any method of communication
 - Making excessive or unreasonable demands on staff
 - Excessive communication, via any method
 - Refusing to accept an answer and making repetitive demands
 - Contacting our staff through their personal social media accounts
 - Recording phone calls or meetings with staff without consent and/or publishing the information online on social media channels
- 1.5 This policy outlines our approach to customers whose actions or behaviour we deem unacceptable.
- 1.6 If a customer believes that a member of our staff or a contractor acting on behalf of Croydon Council has exhibited unreasonable behaviour as described in this policy, they can report this using our complaints process.
- 1.7 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.

- 1.8 However, the actions of customers who are persistently angry, demanding, aggressive, or intimidating can create unreasonable demands on, or manifest unacceptable behaviour toward, our staff and contractors. It is these actions that we consider unacceptable and aim to manage under this policy. These actions have been categorised into three broad headings:
- Violence, aggression, abusive behaviour
 - Unreasonable demands
 - Unreasonable persistence

2. Violence, Aggression, Abusive Behaviour

- 2.1. Violence and aggression in the workplace are defined by the Health and Safety Executive as any incident where an employee is abused, threatened, or assaulted in relation to their work. This definition of violence is not limited to acts that may cause physical harm; it also includes behaviours or language (whether spoken or written) that can make staff and contractors feel scared, threatened, or abuse.
- 2.2. Examples of behaviours that fall under this category include threats, physical violence, verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, and rudeness. We also consider inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations to be forms of abusive behaviour.
- 2.3. We recognise the difference between anger and aggression. For instance, the anger some complainants may express relates to the subject matter of their complaint. However, it becomes unacceptable when this anger turns into aggression directed toward our staff or contractors.
- 2.4. The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse, or harassment towards our staff is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the customer. Incidents will be reported to the Police. This will always be the case if physical violence is threatened or used.
- 2.5. Any verbal or written threats, damage, abuse, harassment, assault, or expression of intent to inflict harm shall constitute as a breach of your tenancy agreement. Tenancy enforcement action will be robustly pursued in these cases, in line with your Terms of Tenancy and Legislation, including asking the court to grant an injunction and/or a possession order to evict you and your household from your home.
- 2.6. Violence and abuse include the following:
- threatening behaviour, such as shaking fists, property damage, vandalism, or throwing objects.

- verbal or written threats, any expression of an intent to inflict harm.
- harassment, any behaviour that demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, annoys, alarms or verbally abuses a person and that is known or would be expected to be unwelcome, this includes words, gestures, intimidation, bullying, or other inappropriate behaviour.
- Physical attacks – hitting, shoving, pushing or kicking.

2.7. Risk Incident Categories:

The following key risk incident categories have been identified across the Council. These are:

- verbal abuse
- racist comments
- throwing substances (including objects, powders and liquids) onto a person
- brandishing weapons or other objects
- threats or risk of injury to Council employees and/or contractors
- punching and kicking
- hitting and slapping
- sexual assault
- incidents where reckless behaviour results in physical harm to others
- incidents where attempts are made to cause physical harm to others and fail
- incidents of non-physical behaviour or physical assault caused by someone associated with the individual e.g., carer, friend, relative, guardian etc
- Unintentional application of force, for example where a person lacks capacity at the time due to a mental health condition.
- householder's pets e.g., dangerous dogs
- environmental/property conditions e.g., unsanitary living conditions
- other anti-social behaviour

- 2.7. The Council has a zero-tolerance policy towards threatening or prejudicial behaviour towards any member of staff. Whilst we accept that those in contact with us may feel angry, it is not considered acceptable when that anger manifests aggression directed to staff, contractors working on council's behalf or other customers.

3. Unreasonable Demands

- 3.1. Customers may make what we consider unreasonable demands based on the volume of information they request, the nature or scale of service they expect, or the frequency of their enquiries. What constitutes unreasonable demands will always depend on the specific circumstances and the seriousness of the issues raised.
- 3.2. Examples of actions that fall under this category include demanding responses within an unreasonable timeframe; insisting on speaking to a specific staff member; making repeated phone calls, emails, or letters; frequently changing the substance of the complaint or query; or raising unrelated concerns.
- 3.3. We view these demands as unacceptable and unreasonable when they significantly impact our work, such as consuming an excessive amount of staff time at the expense of other customers or functions. This situation can be challenging to manage, as it often places the burden on individual staff members, leading to a substantial and negative impact.

4. Unreasonable Persistence

- 4.5. We acknowledge that some customers may not accept that we cannot assist them further or provide a service beyond what has already been offered. They may persist in disagreeing with the actions or decisions made regarding their cases or continue to contact us about the same issue.
- 4.6. Examples of actions that fall under this category include persistently refusing to accept a decision made regarding a request or complaint, continually rejecting explanations about our limitations, and pursuing a case without providing any new information. While the manner in which these customers approach us may be reasonable, their persistent behaviour is not.

5. Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

5.1. Managing Unacceptable Customer Actions

We will manage unacceptable actions from customers based on their nature and severity. If these actions negatively impact our ability to perform our work and serve others, we may need to limit a customer's contact with our staff. We will strive to do this in a manner that still allows customers to address everyday issues, such as reporting repairs.

5.2. Restrictions on Contact

Contact may be restricted in person, by telephone, through letters, electronically, or by any combination of these methods. In some cases, we will confirm a single point of contact.

5.3. Handling Abusive Communication

We do not engage in communication that is abusive towards our staff. If this occurs, we will inform the customer that we find their language offensive, unnecessary, and unhelpful. We will ask them to stop using such language and clarify that we will not respond unless they comply. If necessary, we may require future contact to be made through a third party, and if the customer refuses, we will cease communication.

5.4. Ending Telephone Calls

Our staff will terminate telephone calls if the caller is deemed aggressive, abusive, or offensive. We recognise the difference between anger and aggression, and our staff are trained to handle such situations. The staff member on the call has the right to declare the behaviour unacceptable and end the call if it does not improve. There may be instances where a staff member needs to end a call without the customer's agreement, such as when the customer is not listening or the conversation is unproductive. In all instances where a call is ended, we will issue at least two warnings to the customer.

5.5. Handling Repetitive Contact

If a customer repeatedly calls, visits the office without an appointment, sends irrelevant or duplicate documents, or raises previously addressed issues, we may take the following actions:

- Only accept telephone calls from the customer at designated times on specific days or designate one staff member to handle all communications from the complainant moving forward.
- Require the customer to make an appointment to see a specific staff member before visiting the office.
- Prohibit in-person contact, requiring the customer to communicate in writing (via letter or email) only.
- Remove the option for the customer to contact a specific staff member directly through text messages or work mobile calls if persistent contact continues. We will ask the customer to use alternative contact methods.
- Implement any other action we deem appropriate. We will always communicate what action we are taking and explain the reasons behind it on a case-to-case basis.

5.6. Home Visits

When visiting a customer's home, including for repairs, we may send two staff members. Our staff will leave the premises if they feel threatened by abusive language or any form of unacceptable behaviour.

5.7. Excessive Correspondence

If a customer continues to correspond on multiple issues excessively, we will inform them that only a specific number of issues will be considered within a given timeframe and/or responded to within a set period which will be outlined in our response. We will ask them to limit or focus their requests accordingly.

5.8. Social Media Communication

Customer who contact staff through their personal social media accounts will not receive a response and will be blocked.

6. Restricting Customer Contact

- 6.1. If we have taken steps to address unacceptable behaviour, we will inform the customer about the actions we have taken and explain why their behaviour is considered challenging or unacceptable. We will encourage the customer to adjust their behaviour and provide an opportunity for a discussion so that any reasonable adjustments can be considered.
- 6.2. If the customer's behaviour does not improve, we may consider formal actions, which may include:
 - Limiting contact to a specific communication method for all non-urgent enquiries, such as emails or letters only.
 - Designating a named staff member or advocate to serve as the single point of contact for the customer.
 - Responding to correspondence within a specified timeframe, such as weekly or biweekly emails addressing non-urgent enquiries.
- 6.2. We will notify the customer in writing if formal action is taken, explaining why we made the decision to restrict future contact, the details of the contact arrangements, and the duration of these restrictions. The decision to limit customer contact may be reconsidered if the customer demonstrates more acceptable behaviour. In cases of extreme and persistent unreasonable behaviour, we may inform the police, initiate legal action, or take action regarding tenancy.
- 6.3. Customers have the right to appeal formal actions by submitting a written explanation of their disagreement. This appeal will be reviewed by a Head of Service.

7. Reasonable Adjustments

- 7.1. We respect and value the differences of our customers and staff and we will treat everyone we work with fairly, and with respect. This policy has been considered in light of our [equality and diversity policy](#) and is compliant with its principles. We recognise that some disabilities and health issues may make it difficult for customers to appreciate the impact that their behaviour may have on themselves, staff and other customers. Where we are aware that a customer is vulnerable, disabled or has particular needs, staff will make

reasonable adjustment to meet their needs. Examples of adjustments that may be made include (but are not limited to):

- using different ways to communicate
- providing written communication in large print, coloured text, or in translation
- signposting the customer to other support services
- arranging for a particular member of staff to act as a single point of contact

7.2. However, we do not expect our staff to accept being subjected to aggressive, offensive, threatening, or abusive actions, language, or behaviour.

7.3. We may still use the policy if there are actions or behaviours which have a negative effect on our staff or our work even where a reasonable adjustment has been made.

8. Monitoring Unacceptable Behaviour

8.1. We will record and monitor all incidence of what we deem unacceptable behaviour from customers and document how we managed the behaviour. The status of all customers with restricted contact arrangements will be reviewed every 12 months.

8.2. Tenancy officers will monitor and review incidences of unacceptable behaviour and send requests to their line manager asking for the restriction to be extended (if valid) or for the restriction to be lifted.

9. Appeals and Complaints

9.1. A resident or customer has the right to appeal any formal restriction of contact we've put in place or any other action we've taken under this Policy. We may refer them for support from an external agency to put forward the basis of their appeal.

9.2. The appeal must set out in writing why the resident or customer feels the decision is not justified in accordance with this Policy. It must be within 21 working days of receiving notification of the restriction. A manager not involved in the original decision will review the appeal and respond within 14 working days.

9.3. Complaints concerning the implementation of this Policy, will be dealt with through the [Corporate complaints policy and procedure | Croydon Council](#)

10. Equalities Statement

10.1. The Council is committed to promoting fair and equal access to services, and as community leaders the Council's policies, procedures and day-to-day

practices have been established to promote an environment which is free from unlawful and unfair discrimination, while valuing the diversity of all.

- 10.2. Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, and age is not acceptable. The Council will take action to ensure no person using the Council's premises, or services, receives less favourable treatment, or is disadvantaged by requirements, or conditions that cannot be justified. The Council will tackle inequality, treat all people with dignity and respect, and continue to work to improve services for all service users.
- 10.3. The legal framework for the Council's approach is provided by the Equality Act and specifically by the Public Sector Equality Duty, under which a public authority must work consciously to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, as well as advancing equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with differing characteristics.
- 10.4. Further detail on the Duty, and the Council's approach to fulfilling its requirements, can be found on our website [Croydon Equalities Pledge](#).

11. GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018

11.1. Personal data will be:

- Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.
- Collected for a specific and legitimate purpose and not used for anything other than this stated purpose, or as provided for in our privacy and fair processing notices.
- Relevant and limited to whatever the requirements are for which the data is processed.
- Accurate, and, where necessary, kept up to date. Any identified inaccuracies will be amended or removed without undue delay.
- Stored for as long as required, as specified within Housing Management's Records Retention policy.
- Secured with appropriate solutions that protect the data against unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction, or damage.

Further information about the Council's commitment to the [General Data Protection Regulations](#) can be found on our website.

12. Monitoring and Review

- 12.1. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if required by statutory, regulatory, best practice, emerging developments, or circumstances arising from reviews of other Council-wide policies.

12.2. Arrangements for a full internal audit of the unacceptable behaviour process to be undertaken by Croydon Council's Internal Auditors. The full scope of the audit will be agreed upon with the Internal Auditors, Director of Housing Management, and Heads of service.

13. Document Control

13.1. This is a controlled document and should not be changed unless by authorisation of the policy holder.

Monitoring		
Approved Date:	27.02.2026	
Next Review Date:	February 2029	
Effective date:	27.02.2026	
Consultation Review		
Stakeholders review:	July 2025	
Legal review date:	July 2025	
Residents reading group:	28 July 2025	
Policy owner:	Director of Housing Management	
Ratified by:	Housing DMT	
Equality impact assessment:	The impact of this policy will be measured as it is implemented and used as part of a scheduled 1-year implementation compliance review.	
Version Updates		
Version Number	Summary of change	Author and Approver
1.0	New Policy	Developed by subject matter experts in Housing and reviewed with the help of the Residents Reading Group