

# UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

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# Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Policy provides a consistent approach to dealing with those customers who are deemed to be behaving in an unacceptable way.

## 2 STRATEGIC LINKS

2.1 The Policy:

- Supports Stockport Homes' aim to '*Be a great place to work*' and ASPIRE culture of treating each other with Respect.
- Operates alongside the Customer Feedback Policy, which provides a framework for dealing with customer complaints.
- Links to the Managing Attendance Policy, which is designed to identify and address factors in the workplace which may be affecting employee attendance.
- Operates alongside the Lone Working Policy as all employees should take appropriate measures to ensure they are working safely and maintaining personal safety, including undertaking risk assessments where relevant.
- Informs and relies upon the warning marker system that is applied to the Housing Management IT System. It is the responsibility of employees and managers to check appropriate records before meeting or interacting with customers.
- Links to the Accessible Information Policy, which supports customers with their specific communication needs, such as translation services.
- Links to the Regulator of Social Housing's Regulatory Framework. In particular it ensures that Stockport Homes is able to respond to tenants needs in the way services are provided, by ensuring that all customers have reasonable access to services, as well as providing ways for tenants to express a complaint.

## 3 KEY FEATURES OF THE POLICY

3.1 Unacceptable behaviour by customers, which can be seen as a range of behaviours, can be split into three main themes, each relating to a set of behaviours which Stockport Homes classes as being unacceptable:

- *Abusive behaviour: Any behaviour where a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.*
- *Unreasonable demands: for example raising trivial issues that prevent a reasonable investigation; changing the basis of an enquiry to obtain a different outcome; insisting on an investigation where none is required; or demanding unreasonable outcomes or actions.*
- *Unreasonable persistence: for example refusing to accept a decision following a reasonable investigation or making repeated contacts about the same issue.*

3.2 The list above is indicative rather than exhaustive and other behaviours may be classed as unacceptable if they were to prevent, for example, a member of staff, or someone representing SHG, from delivering a service to customers in a fair and proportionate way. The Policy is designed to provide a flexibility to tackle unacceptable behaviour in whatever form it takes and whenever it occurs as the safety and welfare of staff is of paramount importance. This includes face-to-face and online interactions, including all forms of social media, which may directly or indirectly refer to staff or Stockport Homes. Stockport Homes may restrict contact, remove online posts without notice or take legal action dependant on the circumstances of the case.

3.3 It is important to treat each customer as an individual and have regard for their personal circumstances. There are many reasons why customers exhibit unreasonable behaviours including:

- Being unreasonable due to circumstances unknown to Stockport Homes and/or outside of the control of Stockport Homes
- Acting out of character at times of stress, anxiety or distress
- A medical condition or mental illness which makes effective communications difficult with or without giving the appearance of being aggressive
- The use of alcohol, drugs or other substances
- A learning difficulty or disability which hinders positive formal social communication
- Language barriers that mean communication is not clear or easily understood by either party

3.4 Stockport Homes' members of staff and those working on behalf of Stockport Homes will make reasonable allowances for behaviour which is driven by one or more of these factors whilst recognising that it needs to protect staff. Support will be offered to customers in instances where the possibility of resolving the matter will be improved by additional support, but the health and well-being of staff members is also of upmost importance and both elements should be considered as part of any action to tackle unacceptable behaviour.

3.5 Stockport Homes has a duty to protect those working on its behalf in the small number of cases where behaviour is inappropriate, vexatious, abusive, persistent or enduring. In instances such as these employees will be supported by their manager to put suitable arrangements in place to deal with the customer's behaviour, for example by limiting contact, withdrawing services or taking any other proportionate action to manage the unacceptable behaviour.

3.6 Stockport Homes has classified the three types of unacceptable behaviour into three levels of seriousness:

- Minor incidents, which cover unreasonable demands, unreasonable persistence, and verbal abuse without threats, swearing and shouting;
- Serious incidents, which covers abusive behaviour such damage to property and strong verbal abuse, intimidation or hate abuse.
- Major incidents, which covers abusive behaviour such as direct threats of and/or actual physical violence.

3.7 In the latter two types SHG will consider applying for an injunction to protect members of staff where behaviour includes threats of violence, actual violence or hate crime.

## **4 DATA PROTECTION**

4.1 The approach to managing unacceptable behaviour requires a balance between protecting staff and holding information about customers in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and Data Protection Act 2018. Stockport Homes maintains a fair approach by sending a warning letter to a customer when a minor incident occurs. In the event of serious and major incidents, a warning marker will be added to the customer's records so that other staff can be protected from similar incidents.

## **5 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

5.1 The outcomes are of the EIA process added hate abuse as being explicitly detailed within the policy and procedure as a serious incident and will be dealt with in line with all serious incidents. It also retained the process of positive provisions such as the engagement of advocacy services to support customers.

## **6 OWNERSHIP, MONITORING & REVIEW**

6.1 The Policy is jointly owned by the Performance and Improvement Team (Assistant Chief Executive) and the Anti-social Behaviour Team (Neighbourhoods and Support).

6.2 The Policy will be reviewed at least every three years or in line with service demands or customer feedback.