



Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy

OCTOBER 2025

Registered provider of social housing registration number LH4014. Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, society number 27656R.

Policy Statement

This policy sets out our approach to manage the small number of cases where the actions of customers become unacceptable because they involve abuse of Broadacres colleagues or processes and the behaviour, or actions are considered unacceptable.

Purpose

This policy sets out our approach to managing contact with customers whose actions or behaviour are considered unacceptable. Colleagues must read this in conjunction with the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour procedure.

Customer concerns are a valuable source of feedback and assist in improving service quality. This policy is not intended to prevent customers from raising legitimate and important concerns, enquiries or requests, or pursuing them.

This policy covers all areas of our work and all forms of contact with customers such as telephone, text, letter, email, messaging via social media or face to face contact.

Objectives

We believe that our customers have the right to be heard, understood and respected. We work hard to be open and accessible to everyone. However, on occasions people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to the customer approaching us.

However, Broadacres will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour nor actions that result in unacceptable or excessive demands on our service in that it prevents colleagues from carrying out their duties effectively.

It is these behaviours and actions that we aim to manage under this Policy. The Policy is in place to protect and support colleagues, where it is considered that a customer's actions are unacceptable, and we may choose to restrict or change access to any service we provide.

Our colleagues have the right to do their jobs without fear of being abused or harassed.

Reasonable adjustments

We understand that some customers may find it difficult to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially when they are anxious or upset. We ask that customers explain what adjustments they're looking for and how this will ensure they can access our services and we will ask customers whether there are any adjustments they feel they may need.

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

- considering different methods of communications
- providing written communication in large print, coloured text, or translations
- giving clear warnings if conversations become unproductive and allowing customers the opportunity to modify their behaviour before ending a call

However, we may still use this policy even after putting in place reasonable adjustments, if a customer continues to demonstrate actions or behaviours that are having a detrimental effect on colleagues or services.

Defining unacceptable customer behaviour

We respect the rights of freedom of speech and rights of opinion. The actions of customers who are upset, demanding and persistent may result in unreasonable demands or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. It is these actions that are considered unacceptable and ones that this policy aims to manage. These actions are grouped under three broad headings:

1. Aggressive and abusive behaviour.

We expect our colleagues to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards colleagues is unacceptable. Colleagues understand and mindful of the difference between aggression and anger. It is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards colleagues.

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 colleagues to feel offended, afraid, threatened or abused. Examples of behaviours grouped under this heading include:

- threats
- physical violence
- personal verbal abuse
- derogatory remarks and rudeness

Broadacres colleagues will always do their best to assist, but if a customer behaves or is perceived to behave in a rude, offensive, abusive, aggressive, threatening or intimidating manner they have the right to end the conversation or terminate a visit or call.

Where any request for information is contained within abusive correspondence, the information requested will be provided where it is appropriate to do so. However, the author of any offensive or abusive correspondence will be warned in writing that their communication is considered offensive or abusive, that it will not be further tolerated, and the action that will be taken if it does.

If an individual colleague does not wish to respond to a personally abusive or offensive email or other correspondence, they may refer it to their line manager to appropriately action.

We take any threat, intimidation or harassment of our staff, and those working with us very seriously. If it is deemed necessary, we will report any behaviour of this type to the appropriate authority (which may include the police).

It is also considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour. E.g. Using social media or the internet to publish unreasonable or derogatory views or opinions in relation to Broadacres or any linked company or colleague.

2. Unreasonable demands

A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on our ability to deliver our service to our other customers.

It is important to note that all customers have a right to express their views in a reasonable and acceptable manner. However, customers may make what are considered to be unreasonable requests or demands, through the amount of information they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect or the number of approaches they make.

What amounts to unreasonable requests will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the customer. Examples of actions grouped under the heading include:

- making unreasonable request or demands of colleagues, whether in relation to provision of information or documents, or expecting responses within an unreasonable timescale
- insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular colleague
- an excessive number of phone calls, letters, emails or social media contact
- repeatedly changing the substance of an enquiry/complaint or raising unrelated concerns
- refusing to specify or discuss the grounds of a complaint or enquiry, despite offers of assistance with this from colleagues
- refusing to co-operate with the investigation process while still wishing their concerns to be resolved
- refusing to accept that issues are not within our remit
- insisting on a complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
- seeking to have colleagues replaced that are dealing with a complaint without sufficient grounds
- changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or denying statements made at an earlier stage
- providing trivial or irrelevant information which the customer expects to be commented on, or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all fully answered
- covertly recording meetings and conversations
- adopting a 'scattergun' approach; pursuing a concern, complaint or complaints with several different colleagues at the same time

3. Unacceptable persistence

It is recognised that some customers will not or cannot accept that colleagues are unable to assist them further or provide a level of service

other than that provided already. Customers may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken or contact a colleague persistently about the same issue.

Unacceptable or persistent levels of contact include:

- continuous contact while we are in process of considering a matter
- repeated telephone calls over a short period, for example, a high number of 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

The way in which these customers approach us may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.

The actions of persistent customers are considered to be unacceptable when they take up what we consider to be a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

4. Visit in Pairs

Visit in pairs (VIP's) applies to any customer of Broadacres who presents a possible risk to colleagues or any other agency acting on our behalf because of their previous behaviour, illness or addiction or from persons who may be present in their home who may pose a similar risk

A decision to adjust how we deliver our services or support a customer by placing them on VIP must be based on a specific incident or expression of clearly identifiable concern by a professional, rather than general opinions about that individual.

Customers are likely to have a VIP placed on them for a number of reasons including:

- they may have been violent or threatened violence
- they may be active sex offenders or may have made unwanted sexual advances towards members of staff
- they may have a recent history of serious anti social behaviour
- they may be volatile due to an illness or addiction
- they may associate with persons who are similarly volatile through illness or addiction

- they may have made complaints against members of staff which, upon investigation, were spurious and without foundation

This list is not exhaustive, other reasons maybe considered if a customer's behaviour or information about them may give rise to a risk.

Due to the nature of some of the above reasons for VIP's, informing the customer could create a substantial risk of a violent reaction from them. For example, this could be because of the nature of the incident or concern or because of the risk it potentially poses to another individual.

In such cases it may be reasonable not to inform the customer as described in the policy; however, any such decision will be made in consultation with Broadacres' Solicitor and confirmed by the Director of Customer Experience.

Managing unacceptable behaviour

Where colleagues are subject to unreasonable behaviour (such as verbal abuse) during a telephone call, visit or face to face interview, they will advise the customer concerned that their behaviour is unacceptable and that continued behaviour of this nature will lead to the telephone call/interview/visit being aborted.

We may then take action to restrict a customer's contact with us. Any such restrictions will be evidence based, appropriate and proportionate, and the customer will in most circumstances be advised in writing why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable, what action we are taking and its planned duration. We will also tell them that we will periodically review whether the restrictions imposed are still necessary and should remain.

Any restrictions should not prevent us from carrying out our contractual, statutory or regulatory responsibilities. For example, we would continue to provide a repair service to the customer, however the delivery of this service may have to be adjusted to safeguard our colleagues and our customers.

Action to restrict contact can only be authorised by a Director of Service. (In the case of placing a VIP on a customer this will be the Head of Customer Experience and Support).

Restrictions imposed will be appropriate for the customer and proportionate. The options most likely to be considered are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters/emails only)
- requiring contact to take place with a named officer
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times
- notifying the customer that only 'significant' and serious queries will be addressed

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of colleagues or customers, we will report the matter to the police or consider taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the customer prior warning of our intended actions.

A warning notification will be registered on the customer's account to ensure that all colleagues are aware of the unacceptable customer behaviour.

Customers can appeal a decision to restrict contact by asking for a review. A Director of a service or Head of Service not involved in the original decision will hear this review.

We treat customers in a fair and non-discriminatory way, in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy.

We accept that some behaviour displayed by customers may be due to a vulnerability (that we may or may not be aware of).

Before taking any action under this policy we will liaise with any known support workers/providers and may liaise/work in partnership with other agencies.

Monitoring and review

This document will be reviewed every three years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to best practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

We will report back to the Group Customer Experience Committee quarterly on the number of customers we have formally placed restrictions on due to unacceptable behaviour.

Equality and diversity

This policy is implemented in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy and associated legislation. Consideration will be given to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

This policy and associated documents are available in different languages and alternative formats where necessary.

Broadacres will comply with the terms of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy when dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour. We are committed to ensuring that no customer will be treated less favourably because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex of sexual orientation – in line with the protected characteristics as described in the equality Act 2010.

Data protection and privacy

We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for Broadacres and must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.

Broadacres Housing Association Limited is an exempt charity and a registered provider of social housing, Homes and Communities Agency number: **LH4014**, and a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, registered number: **27656R**