



### Policy statement

Our staff are expected to treat residents with courtesy, kindness and respect. We expect our staff to be treated in the same way. Most people recognise that staff are trying to do their job, and we are grateful for their understanding and cooperation.

Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of some individuals makes it very difficult for us to deliver our services. In a small number of cases the actions of these individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff, or put an unreasonable demand on our services.

When this happens, in line with our duty as an employer, we will take action to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff who have a right to do their jobs without fear of being abused or harassed.

Likewise we consider the impact of certain behaviour on our ability to do our work and provide a service to other residents. We will not tolerate actions that result in unacceptable or excessive demands on our service that prevent staff from carrying out their duties effectively.

#### Scope

The policy applies to all areas of our work and to all methods of contact including telephone, face-to-face, letters, e-mails, social media and other digital channels.

It applies to all those using Lewisham Council's Housing Services - residents, visitors, and applicants, who our staff, or those working in our behalf, may come into contact with, as part of their role.

#### Violence and Aggression

People may act out of character in times of trouble, distress or frustration, or ill-health, and we understand that someone may be upset with the service they have received. We will judge each situation individually. However it is never acceptable to shout or swear at staff or threaten them. If frustration about a service escalates into aggression towards staff, we consider that as being unacceptable.

Any violence or abuse towards staff will not be tolerated. Violence and aggression is not restricted to an act of physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that can cause staff to feel afraid, threatened, abused or offended.

#### Unacceptable language

Unacceptable language is that which:

- is offensive, derogatory or patronising,
- is discriminatory in any way, including racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic comments. (This may also constitute a hate crime – see the Hate Crime policy);
- makes serious allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt or perverse conduct without any evidence.



We may decide that comments aimed not at us but at third parties are also unacceptable. Examples include rudeness, discriminatory comments, derogatory remarks, or raising unsubstantiated allegations towards third parties.

### Harassment and threats

Staff have the right to carry out their duties free from harassment or threats of harassment. We ask all residents to respect that staff are delivering services and communicating decisions on behalf of Lewisham Council's Housing Service.

Threats against staff will be taken very seriously and if staff feel scared or threatened at any point during a conversation with a customer, our instruction is that the interaction may be ended at any time.

Examples of behaviours we consider to be harassment against our staff include:

- contacting staff using their personal details or personal social media presence
- publishing personal, sensitive or private information about staff online or other public domains such as noticeboards or newsletters.
- threatening to 'wait' for them outside our office, or following them to their home or car.
- recording telephone discussions and/or publishing the information online on social media (See also CCTV and Surveillance policy)

### Unreasonable demands or levels of contact

If demand from residents/applicants are such that they start to, (or complying with the demand would), substantially impact on the ability of staff to perform their role in the way we expect, this may be considered unreasonable. Examples of such behaviour includes:

- repeatedly demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale,
- insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, when that is not possible or appropriate,
- repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns. (It may be appropriate to raise an additional complaint – see our Complaints policy).

An example of such impact is that the demands take up an excessive amount of staff time, where it will disadvantage other residents ability and rights to use our services.

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made by an individual can cause problems. This can occur over a short period - for example a number of calls in one day or hour, or over a longer period where, for example, we are inundated with information that has already been considered, or is irrelevant to the case.

We may consider that the level of contact has become unacceptable when the amount of time spent responding to a resident is disproportionate to the situation and impedes our normal delivery of the service, including where it impacts on our ability to provide a service to other residents.

### Action we may take

When we experience behaviour or demands which are unacceptable, we may consider taking more formal action. The actions we will consider can include the following:



# Housing Services

## Unacceptable Behaviour Policy Statement

- Warning the resident/applicant about their behaviour and requesting they modify their behaviour in future contact with us.
- Appointing a specific point/method of contact for the resident, or restricting or limiting contact with particular staff members or departments
- Communicating via a third party representative
- Deciding not to investigate a complaint on the basis that it has been pursued in a way that is unacceptable. (The Complaints policy includes the option for a complainant to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman at any point).
- Restrict communication with a resident – this would be kept under review
- Report incidents to the police
- Take action for a breach of tenancy or lease

We also provide support for staff as part of the action we take. This includes training and communicating this policy to staff, including guidance on its implementation. We will train managers and staff to recognise signs of unreasonable behaviour, and recognise and support colleagues who may be affected by it.

<b>Replaces:</b> Unacceptable Behaviour policy 2023 (Lewisham Homes) Minor updates to reflect the return of services previously managed by Lewisham Homes to Lewisham Council and to verify scope applies throughout the Council's Housing Service	
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