

Wolverhampton Homes Persistent or Unreasonable Customer Contact Policy 2025 - 2028

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1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 Wolverhampton Homes is committed to providing solution focused services for all our customers, learning from complaints and using customer feedback to improve our services. When responding to enquiries or concerns, we will always try to speak to the customer directly to ensure we understand the basis of their complaint / dissatisfaction. We do not normally limit the form or amount of contact a customer can have with us. However, sometimes the frequency or nature of a customer contact can place unreasonable demands on time and resources.
- 1.2 This policy aims to address these issues in a fair and respectful way and explain that we consider each situation on an individual basis. It will detail our approach in these situations methods of contact including telephone, face-to-face, letters, e-mails, social media, and other digital channels.
- 1.3 We understand that there may be mitigating circumstances that cause customer to contact us in an unreasonable or persistent manner, and we will always take an empathetic and supportive approach.
- 1.4 Occasionally, there can be instances where behaviour or actions of those using our services, make it difficult for us to deal with their enquiry or complaint. In a small number of cases the actions of individuals can become unacceptable i.e. abuse or aggression towards staff or our processes. This can impact in the service we provide to other customers.

2.0 Unreasonable or excessive demands on services

- 2.1 A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on the work of our services.
- 2.2 Examples of this include:
 - repeatedly demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale.
 - insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible.
 - repeatedly changing the substance of an enquiry or complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
 - Continuous contact while we are in the process of considering a matter.
 - repeated telephone calls over a short period, for example, a high number 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.
 - unnecessarily or excessive copying us into emails to other parties.
 - repeated complaints about the same or similar issues.
- 2.3 This can impact on service delivery where demand takes up an excessive amount of staff time and in doing so disadvantages our other customers and prevents enquiries or complaints from being dealt with quickly.

3.0 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

- 3.1 We understand that customers can feel upset and angry about the issues they have raised in their enquiry or complaint. If that anger escalates into aggression towards our officers, we consider that unacceptable. Any violence or abuse towards staff will not be tolerated.
- 3.2 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 staff to feel offended, afraid, threatened or abused.
- 3.3 While we accept that those who contact us may feel angry, it is not acceptable to shout, swear or threaten our staff.
- 3.4 Examples of this include unacceptable language or behaviour that is:
- offensive, derogatory, or patronising.
 - is discriminatory in any way, including racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic comments.
 - makes serious allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt, or perverse conduct without any evidence.
 - any comments which may be regarded as a hate crime.
 - comments aimed at third parties due to the effect listening or reading may have on our staff e.g. rudeness, offensive comments, derogatory remarks, making inflammatory statements, or raising unsubstantiated allegations made towards these third parties.
 - threatening against staff

We will judge each situation individually, and in some cases, we may decide to inform the Police or consider legal action.

4.0 Harassment

- 4.1 Staff have the right to carry out their duties free from harassment or threats of harassment. We ask all customers to respect that staff are delivering services and communication decisions on behalf of Wolverhampton Homes and therefore this may not reflect their own views or preferences.
- 4.2 Examples of behaviours we consider to be harassment against our staff include:
- recording telephone discussions and publishing the information online such as through YouTube, Vimeo, or Twitter.
 - contacting staff using their personal details or social media presence such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.
 - publishing personal, sensitive, or private information about staff online or other public domains such as noticeboards or newsletters.
 - Behaviour towards our staff that makes them feel intimidated or offended.

5.0 Refusal to co-operate with reasonable requests

- 5.1 When we are looking at a service request or complaint, we will need to ask the customer to cooperate with us:
- with the details of the enquiry or complaint for us to review / investigate.
 - to provide us with further information, evidence, or comments on a request.
 - help us by summarising their concerns.
- 5.2 Sometimes, a customer may repeatedly refuse to co-operate, and this makes it difficult for us to respond. We will always seek to support a customer if they have a specific, genuine difficulty complying with a request.

6.0 Reasonable adjustments

- 6.1 We understand that some of our customers may find it difficult to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially when they are anxious or upset. To help, we ask that customers try to explain what adjustments are needed from us to support with accessing our services or where they wish to make a complaint that they are able to easily do so.
- 6.2 We will always consider making reasonable adjustments for a customer if we are asked to do so. Examples of adjustments we can consider are:
- using different methods of communication including home visits.
 - providing written communication in large print, coloured text, or in translation.
 - consider additional support requirements.
 - giving clear and polite warnings if conversations become unproductive, allowing customers an opportunity to modify their behaviour before the officer ends a call or meeting.
- 6.3 The following options may be suitable, taking the complainant's behaviour and circumstances into account:
- advising the complainant that repeated calls regarding the complaint in question are not acceptable and will be terminated.
 - advising the complainant that their complaint has been responded to as fully as possible in line with our policy outlining the next steps, they may be able to take.
 - providing a specific contact with staff per week or month, time limited where necessary.
 - limiting to one mode of contact; for example, telephone, letter, or email.
 - appointing a single point of contact (SPOC) – where this is implemented, we will explain the reason for this decision in writing and confirm the review period. This contact will be conducted at times to be agreed with the customer and will help to ensure that our communication with and support to the customer is maintained, and they are able to access our services.

- Where face to face contact is requested, we will aim to facilitate this, and this may take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location.
- allowing contact via a third party such as an advocate.
- informing the complainant that future correspondence will be read and placed on file but not acknowledged or registered where this relates to complaints about the same matter.
- adopting a 'zero tolerance' policy – this could include a standard communication, for example, "Wolverhampton Homes operates a zero-tolerance policy, and the safety and respect of its staff is paramount at all times."

6.4 The Head of Service will be asked to review the proposal. When the decision has been taken to apply this policy to a complainant, we will write to the complainant to explain:

- why the decision has been taken
- what action has been taken
- the duration of that action

6.5 A copy of this policy will be provided to the customer.

6.6 All relevant staff will be informed of the arrangement in place, where appropriate, to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach across the company. An alert will be placed on NEC.

7.0 Urgent or Extreme Cases

7.1 In the event of an urgent or extreme case, safeguarding of staff is paramount. Zero tolerance policies and procedures are in place, and any incident of this nature is recorded on our ERAS system. This can result in an alert being added to our housing management system records against an individual / property.

7.2 Consideration should be given to whether we should take further action. This may include involvement of the police or legal action, where it is believed the complainant has committed a criminal offence, such as harassment, assault on staff or criminal damage.

This could also include consideration of using the risk management or health and safety procedures to follow up an event in respect of the impact on staff. A potentially violent person (PVP) system alert may be required.

7.3 Where abusive or threatening language or behaviour are displayed towards our staff or representatives, this will result in a call / in person contact being ended.

8.0 Operating the policy

8.1 The decision must be recorded on the system and must be supported by the following information:

- grounds for applying the policy
- any restrictions to be applied, including scope and detail
- review every three months

8.2 Records will be kept of the name and address of each complainant who is treated as abusive, unreasonable, or persistent, or any other person who so aids the complainant:

- when the restrictions came into force and end
- what the restrictions are
- when the person and the council were advised.

8.3 Employees should notify the Customer Experience Manager of any contact in breach of the restrictions used so that further steps can be taken to manage future contact. This should also be recorded on the system.

9.0 Appeal of decision by complainant or their representative

9.1 A complainant can appeal against restricted and or changes to contact when this policy is applied. The appeal will be considered by a member of the Senior Management Team.

9.2 Written confirmation will be provided to the customer with the outcome of the appeal.

10.0 Reviewing decisions to implement policy

10.1 A three-month review will be undertaken by the Customer Resolution Team and the Head of Service to consider if the arrangements in place should be continued.

10.2 Written confirmation will be provided to the customer to either extend or cease the arrangement.

11.0 Policy review

11.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner where required.

12.0 Privacy and personal data

12.1 Customer privacy is important to us, and we are therefore committed to handling personal data in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679, and any subsequent changes to data protection legislation.

12.2 Our privacy policy can be found on our website:
<https://www.wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk/privacy>