

# Expected Behaviour Procedure

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**Document governance and management**

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## 1. Introduction

Recognition and respect for others is one of our organisational values.

Very occasionally customer behaviour makes it difficult for us to deliver our service effectively or presents a risk to staff. This procedure sets out the standards of behaviour we expect from those we interact with and what we will do if behaviour does not meet the expected standards.

We call those we interact with 'customers' regardless of whether they are using a service.

The procedure is focused on expected customer behaviour, expected staff behaviour is set out in our [code of conduct](#).

## 2. Principles

### 2.1 We expect:

- our staff to behave in a way that is consistent with our organisational values and [code of conduct](#), by being professional and treating customers with courtesy, respect and dignity
- our customers to treat staff with courtesy and respect.

### 2.2 We will:

- recognise customers can act out of character in times of trouble or distress
- follow our [complaints handling procedure](#) when customers express dissatisfaction
- protect the health and wellbeing of our staff from unacceptable behaviour such as unreasonable persistence, threats or offensive behaviour
- apply this policy proportionately ensuring customers can make legitimate service requests.

### 2.3 What is unacceptable behaviour?

We consider the following to be unacceptable:

- aggressive or abusive behaviour
- unreasonable levels of contact
- unreasonable demands
- unreasonable use of technology.

We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because a customer is forceful or determined. What we consider unacceptable will depend on the circumstances and seriousness of the issues raised and be consistent with common understanding of unacceptable behaviour.

The following examples are not exhaustive.

**Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes:**

- threats
- physical violence
- verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and discriminatory language
- rudeness
- inflammatory statements
- unsubstantiated allegations.

**Unreasonable levels of contact include:**

- contacting us repeatedly about the same issue before we have had an opportunity to deal with the initial request
- contacting us repeatedly about the same issue when we have provided a response
- contacting us repeatedly about a subject being handled as part of another process
- contacting us repeatedly to challenge a decision or ask for more information about a process that has concluded – for example a complaint investigation or fitness to practice decision
- continuing to pursue an issue without presenting new information (unless the action is within the terms of our internal review processes).

Contact can be by phone, writing, digital platform or in person.

**Unreasonable demands include:**

- seeking excessive amounts of information
- seeking a service beyond our remit or published service level
- making an excessive number of approaches to the SSSC
- repeatedly changing the subject of the request or raising unrelated issues
- asking for responses within an unreasonable timescale
- insisting on being dealt with by a particular member of staff
- behaviour which is designed to cause disruption to our service
- behaviour which takes up disproportionate time or resource
- behaviour which has the effect of harassing our staff.

**Unreasonable use of technology includes:**

- recording staff without consent
- sharing recordings or transcripts of recordings on digital platforms without consent.

### 3. Roles and responsibilities

#### 3.1 Executive Management Team

Our EMT is responsible for:

- approving this policy
- monitoring the implementation of the policy.

Individual EMT members are responsible for:

- reviewing customer appeals.

#### 3.2 Operational Management Team

Our OMT is responsible for:

- monitoring the implementation of the policy
- ensuring staff awareness of this policy.

Individual OMT members are responsible for:

- decisions to restrict customer contact
- reviewing customer appeals.

### 4. Managing unacceptable behaviour

#### 4.1 Significant incidents

Staff are authorised to end a customer interaction if they feel threatened or intimidated. Staff have the discretion to decide how best to handle the situation safely, they may:

- give notice that they will end the contact if the behaviour does not stop
- end the contact immediately explaining the behaviour is unacceptable
- end the contact without explaining why.

All incidents must be recorded on [Health & Safety Incident Reporting Forms](#) following the [guidance for completing guidance of for completing and incident or near miss.](#)

#### 4.2 Persistent behaviour

Where customer behaviour becomes unacceptable over several interactions, staff will discuss the behaviour with their line manager and agree what approach to take when they begin to have concerns.

We will raise our concerns with the customer as early as possible - ideally when it occurs.

#### 4.3 What we will do to manage unacceptable behaviour

Where a customer's behaviour is unacceptable, we may take one or a combination of the following measures:

- restrictions to contact such as:
  - contact limits – such a frequency or time of contacts

- contact through specified channels only – for example in writing or phone only
- contact with specified SSSC staff only
- contact through a third party
- limiting contact on certain subjects – we may consider and record the contact if appropriate, but only acknowledge if the contact includes significant new information on the subject.
- ending all customer contact
- reporting criminal behaviour, such as physical violence or threats of violence to the Police.

We may take other action we consider appropriate to the circumstances. All measures we put in place will be proportionate and always at the lowest reasonable level to ensure customers can continue to access our services and our staff are protected.

We will try to maintain at least one form of contact where possible.

Where appropriate we will give customers an opportunity to remedy behaviour, by telling them what behaviour we consider unacceptable before we restrict contact.

Restrictions will be applied immediately if an incident is very serious.

#### **4.4 Support available to staff**

If staff are exposed to unacceptable behaviour, we will support them by providing supportive line management, access to our Employee Assistance Programme and where appropriate specialist advice through Human Resources.

### **5. Reviewing the measures we take**

We will review restrictions placed on customers regularly. We will set a review date when restrictions are applied; this date should be no longer than three months.

### **6. Communicating with the customer**

We will tell customers what action we are taking and why unless we consider that doing so presents greater risk to our staff or the customer. Where we do tell them, we will explain when the restrictions will be reviewed.

### **7. Keeping records**

We will record all:

- customer contacts
- unacceptable behaviour incidents
- decisions to restrict contact - alongside the details of the incident(s)
- review of decisions.

All relevant staff will have access to the decision to restrict contact on the customer record.

### **8. Authority to restrict contact**

OMT members have authority to restrict customer contact following a review of the behaviour.

## **9. Right of appeal**

A customer can appeal a decision to restrict contact within 28 days of being notified.

An OMT or EMT member not involved in the original decision will review decision. They will explain the outcome of their review to the customer.

## **10. Other guidance and documents**

[The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman \(SPSO\) guidance on handling unacceptable actions](#) during complaint handling is available on their website.

## **11. Reporting**

We will report and monitor the restrictions we place on customer contact as part of our complaints reporting.

## **12. Review**

We will review this procedure within three years.





Scottish Social Services Council  
Compass House  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

Tel: 0345 60 30 891  
Email: [enquiries@sssc.uk.com](mailto:enquiries@sssc.uk.com)  
Web: [www.sssc.uk.com](http://www.sssc.uk.com)

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