



UNACCEPTABLE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The behaviour or actions of customers can occasionally, make it difficult for us to deal with their requests or complaints. In some cases, the actions of individuals may become unacceptable because they involve the abuse of our staff/contractors, attempts to circumvent our processes, or make excessive demands on resources.

We will take action to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff/contractors who have a right to do their jobs without fear of being abused or harassed. We will also consider the impact of behaviours on our ability to carry out our work and provide a service to others when these behaviours take up a disproportionate amount of time or where customers are exhibiting unreasonable behaviours.

This policy explains how we will approach these situations. It applies to all areas of our work and to all methods of contact including telephone, face-to-face, letters, e-mail, social media, and other digital channels.

Our aim is to provide high-quality services and have a robust complaints procedure for if things go wrong.

Where we determine staff/contractors are at risk, our customer service processes are not being adhered to or where excessive or unreasonable demands are being place on our services, we will manage the impact on our resources.

The policy is also designed to ensure we take account of the diverse needs of our customers and make reasonable adjustments to enable and maintain positive communication arrangements, so far as is possible.

Document Control

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy explains how we deal with cases where the actions of individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff/contractors or our processes.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 We believe that customers of our service have a right to be heard, understood, and respected. We work hard to be open and accessible to everyone.
- 2.2 Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of individuals using our service makes it very difficult for us to deal with their enquiry, complaint or service issue. In a small number of cases the actions of individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff/contractors or our processes.
- 2.3 When this happens, we have to take action to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff/contractors who have a right to do their jobs without fear of being abused or harassed. We also consider the impact of the behaviour on our ability to do our work and provide a service to others.
- 2.4 This policy explains how we will approach these situations. 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.

3.0 Actions Derby Homes considers as unacceptable.

- 3.1 People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a customer contacting Derby Homes.
- 3.2 However, Derby Homes will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour nor actions that result in unacceptable or excessive demands on our service that prevents staff/contractors from carrying out their duties effectively. It is these behaviours and actions that we aim to manage under this Policy.

4.0 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

- 4.1 We understand that customers may be upset and angry about issues they have raised in their enquiry, complaint or service issue. If that anger escalates into aggression towards Derby Homes staff/contractors, we consider that unacceptable. Any violence or abuse towards staff/contractors or contractors will not be tolerated.
- 4.2 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/contractors to feel offended, afraid, threatened or abused.

4.3 We will consider each situation individually and appreciate individuals who come to us may be upset. While we accept that those who contact us may feel angry, it is not acceptable to shout or swear at staff/contractors.

4.4 Unacceptable language includes:

- is offensive, derogatory, or patronising,
- is discriminatory in any way, including racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic comments; or
- makes serious allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt, or perverse conduct without any evidence.

4.5 We may decide that comments aimed not at us but at third parties are unacceptable because of the effect that listening or reading them may have on our staff/contractors. Examples include rudeness, offensive comments, derogatory remarks, making inflammatory statements, or raising unsubstantiated allegations made towards these third parties.

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

5.0 Unacceptable demands

5.1 A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on the work of Derby Homes. Examples of this behaviour include:

- Repeatedly demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale,
- Insisting on, or refusing to speak to a particular member of staff/contractor.
- Making repeated and unnecessary contact whilst we are already in the course of dealing with an enquiry, complaint or carrying out a service request.
- Refusing to accept a decision where explanations for the decision have been provided.
- Repeatedly changing the substance of an enquiry or complaint or raising unrelated concerns.

5.2 An example of such impact would be that the demand takes up an excessive amount of staff/contractor time and in doing so disadvantages other customers and prevents their own enquiries, complaints or service issues from being dealt with quickly.

6.0 Unacceptable levels of contact

6.1 Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to our service by an individual creates problems. This can occur over a short period, for example, a number of calls in one day or hour.

6.2 It may also occur over the lifespan of an enquiry, complaint or service issue when a customer repeatedly makes long telephone calls to us or inundates us with copies of information that have been sent already or that is irrelevant to the enquiry, complaint or service issue, this includes unnecessarily or excessively copying us into emails to other parties.

6.3 We consider that the level of contact has become unacceptable when the amount of time spent talking to a customer on the telephone, or responding to, reviewing, and filing emails, written correspondence or social media comments impacts on our ability to deal with that enquiry, complaint or service issue, or with other customers' enquiries, complaints or service issues.

7.0 Harassment

7.1 Staff/contractors have the right to carry out their duties free from harassment or threats of harassment. We ask all customers to respect that staff/contractors are delivering services and communicating decisions on behalf of Derby Homes and therefore this may not reflect their own views or preferences.

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

- recording telephone discussions and publishing or sharing the information online or through social media
- recording, storing and sharing video footage recorded by any means
- contacting staff/contractors using their personal details, through social media accounts or any other messaging platforms
- publishing or sharing personal, sensitive, or private information about staff or contractors online or other public domains such as noticeboards or newsletters.

8.0 Refusal to co-operate.

8.1 When we are looking at any interaction, comment, enquiry, complaint, or service issue, we will need to ask the customer who has initiated contact to work with us. This can include:

- Providing us with the necessary personal information and contact details to allow us to identify them as a customer and take any follow-up actions
- Agreeing with us the detail of the enquiry, complaint, or service issue we will look at
- Providing us with further information, evidence, or comments on request, or
- Helping us by summarising their concerns.

8.2 Sometimes, an individual repeatedly refuses to co-operate and this makes it difficult for us to proceed. We will always seek to assist someone if they have a specific, genuine difficulty complying with a request.

8.3 However, we consider it is unacceptable to bring an enquiry, complaint, or service issue to us and then not respond to reasonable, clear and appropriate requests by staff/contractors.

9.0 Reasonable adjustments

9.1 We understand that some customers may find it difficult to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially when they are anxious or upset. In order to do this, we ask that customers explain what adjustments they are looking for and how this will ensure they can access Derby Homes' services.

9.2 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.
- providing written communication in large print, bold text, or in translation.
- giving clear warnings if conversations become unproductive and allowing customers opportunity to modify their behaviour before ending a call.

9.3 However, we do not expect our staff/contractors to accept being subjected to aggressive, offensive, threatening, or abusive actions, language, or behaviour.

9.4 We may still use the policy if there are actions or behaviours which are having a negative effect on our staff/contractors or our work even where a reasonable adjustment has been made.

10.0 Actions we may take.

10.1 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:

- Warning the customer about their behaviour and requesting that the customer modifies their behaviour in future contact with us.
- Appointing a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for the customer at Derby Homes
- Communicating only in writing
- Deciding not to respond/engage in a communication/issue on the basis that it has been pursued in a way that is unacceptable.
- Restricting or limiting contact with Derby Homes
- Stop all communication with a customer and communicate only via a nominated representative.

- In exceptional circumstances, notify relevant public authorities.
- 10.2 Where it is decided that formal action must be taken to manage someone's behaviour (for example, appointing a Single Point of Contact), we will inform them of the decision in writing. A note will be placed on our records to this effect.
- 10.3 Customers have the right to appeal the decision and they will be informed how to do this in the formal letter.
- 10.4 Any actions taken will be reviewed after 12 months, or earlier if the need arises.

11.0 Social media platforms and new technologies

The terminology in this policy is not intended to be comprehensive nor exhaustive. We recognise that technology can emerge and adapt more rapidly than we could hope to capture in this document.

- 11.1 Social media platforms and new technologies, such as AI, also present unique ways for people to interact with us. Many of these do not conform to traditional definitions of contact. For example: reactions, tagging, hashtags and public reviews or ratings.
- 11.2 We reserve the right to apply this policy to methods of contact or interactions that are unique to specific social media platforms, websites or emerging technologies if they meet our definitions of unreasonable behaviour.
- 11.3 Some platforms may allow users to create anonymous, unverified or multiple accounts through which they can interact with us. This can limit the options we have to manage unacceptable behaviour, especially if we are unable to verify them with a tenancy or other customer record.
- 11.4 Where we cannot identify someone or an individual refuses to cooperate, formal action may not be possible.
- 11.5 These platforms sometimes limit the actions we can take or offer alternative actions for us to manage unacceptable behaviour. In some cases, automated content moderation tools are available that allow specific words or phrases to be hidden and for profanity filters to be applied.
- 11.6 We will follow the actions detailed in section 10.0 as closely as possible. Where this is not possible or where we are unable to verify who an individual is, we will take the actions available to us. These may include:
- Responding with a warning (publicly or privately)
 - Hiding the relevant public comments
 - Blocking a person from interacting with our page altogether
 - Reporting the behaviour or comments to the relevant site

12.0 Right of Appeal

- 12.1 A customer will have a right to request an independent review of any decision made within this policy.
- 12.2 The request for appeal must be made within 20 working days and addressed to the Customer Experience Team. Arrangements will then be made for an independent review to be conducted by a member of Derby Homes Executive Team within 20 working days and the response communicated to the customer and saved the detail in the Housing Management System.
- 12.3 The restrictions will apply while the appeal is being heard. Customers will also be advised that they have access to the review services of the Housing Ombudsman. In most cases the Ombudsman will encourage local resolution so may not take any formal action to resolve a dispute until it has completed Derby Homes' internal complaints procedure.
- 12.4 The Ombudsman can provide advice and guidance to support the early and local resolution of a case at any point in proceedings and you can contact the Ombudsman at any time during the process.