

LANGSTANE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

UNACCEPTABLE ACTIONS POLICY

1. Introduction

The Association believes that all customers have the right to be heard, understood and respected.

Many customers who wish to complain will be determined or forceful in order to make their feelings or opinions made clear. This is not viewed as unacceptable, and the Association staff are trained to deal with customer complaints.

There are times when a customer behaves in a way which makes it difficult for the Association to deliver its service. This behaviour involves the abuse of staff or our procedures.

This policy covers how to deal with these situations to protect the staff, and to ensure that service provision is not adversely affected by the behaviour of an individual or group of customers.

2. What Are Unacceptable actions?

For the purposes of this policy, the behaviours which are described below will be viewed as unacceptable by the Association.

2.1 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

It is understood and accepted that a customer may be angry, alarmed or distressed when they contact the Association. If these feelings escalate into aggression, this will not be tolerated. For the purpose of this policy, aggression can be behaviour or language (verbal or written) which:

- causes staff to feel abused or threatened
- may include threats, derogatory remarks or personal abuse
- is rude and haranguing
- includes inflammatory statements
- makes unsubstantiated allegations.

2.2 Unrealistic Expectations

If a customer has unrealistic expectations about what the Association can deliver, this can sometimes lead to a situation where that customer makes unreasonable demands.

Demands from customers which the Association views as unacceptable include:

- expecting responses in unreasonable timescales. The Association has response times built in to many of its policies and procedures and dealing with unrealistic demands from a customer will impact on the service provided to other customers
- insisting on seeing a specific member of staff when this is either not possible, or it is inappropriate under the circumstances
- repeatedly changing the nature of a complaint or raising other unrelated concerns, therefore causing an unreasonable demand on staff to complete an investigation.

2.3 Excessive Levels of Contact

This includes both the volume and the duration of contact with the Association, for example:

- excessive numbers of contacts over a short period
- excessively long and repetitive telephone calls
- submission or excessive amounts of information, or multiple copies of the same or irrelevant information.

All of the above impacts on the Association's ability to process an enquiry, or to deliver services required by other customers.

2.4 Over-use of an Association Procedure

Although our customers have the right to make multiple requests for a service, or to make multiple complaints it is viewed as unacceptable when the effect of this is to harass or to prevent the Association from implementing a decision.

3. Managing Unacceptable Actions

There are a range of options available to staff when they encounter unacceptable actions from a customer. These include:

- allocating a Link Officer to the individual. This can be either a staff member or a third party. The Link Officer becomes the sole point of contact for that customer and all communications are channelled through the Link.
- restricting the contact to in writing only
- limiting telephone contact to only certain times on certain days
- see the customer by appointment only
- returning any repeat or excessive correspondence and advise that future repeat correspondence will be shredded
- in cases where a customer is contacting regarding an excessive range of issues, consideration will be given to a limited number of issues over a given period
- in serious cases, the issue of warning letters for aggressive or abusive behaviour possibly leading to legal action or banning the customer from the Association offices.

In all cases where one of the above options is exercised, then the customer will be advised in writing of the action being taken and the reasons the decision was made by the Association.

4. Staff Training and Resources

The Association is committed to providing the staff with all the support and training they require to deal with unacceptable actions from customers. It is therefore committed to ensuring that all staff and customers are aware of this policy and that staff are given appropriate training such as:

- dealing with challenging behaviour
- complaint handling
- assertiveness.

All staff will be aware of the procedures they are required to follow when they encounter unacceptable behaviour, and the role team leaders and other senior staff have in terms of providing support and ensuring appropriate action is taken to deal with a situation.

5. Monitoring and Review

The operation of this policy will be done through reporting regularly to the Departmental Managers Meeting on how many times the Association has had to exercise an option from those listed in Section 3.

The information will also be available to customers on a quarterly basis via the Association's website, and will be published alongside other performance information in the Association newsletter.

Right to Complain

In the event you are not satisfied with the service you have received, please contact the Association for a copy of our Complaints Policy, which can also be viewed on our website.

Equality and Diversity

The Association is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all areas of its work, and discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated.

Approved by Tenants' Services Sub Committee: 26 October 2012

Review Date: October 2013