



The Langstane Group

Unacceptable Actions Policy

Leadership Team Approval Date	17 March 2022
Board of Management/Committee	Leadership Team (delegated authority to approve)
Approval Date	17 March 2022
Implementation Date	1 April 2022
Review Date	April 2025
Version	V3

Policy Version	Date of Approval	Changes made to Policy
Version 1	26 October 2012	First Issue.
Version 2	21 January 2019	Altered to fit new template format requirements.
		Changes following consultation with Registered Tenant Panel.
Version 3	<i>Delegated authority to the Leadership Team to approve.</i> 17 March 2022	Minor amendments from Senior Management Team to Leadership Team and grammar corrections. Addition of terminating phone calls under 'managing unacceptable behaviour'.

1. Introduction

Langstane Housing Association is a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society, and a registered social landlord with charitable status.

The Langstane Group (Langstane / the Group) consists of Langstane Housing Association Limited and its wholly owned subsidiaries.

This policy applies to all members of the Langstane Group.

The Group believes all customers have the right to be heard, understood and respected and feedback is welcomed by the Association. It is accepted that many customers who wish to complain will be determined or forceful in order to make their feelings or opinions made clear and staff are trained to deal with this.

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

There are a range of actions the Group considers to be unacceptable. These include:

- aggressive or abusive behaviour
- unrealistic expectations
- unreasonable levels of contact
- over use of Association processes (for example, repeating previous complaints that have been closed after fully completing all three stages of the procedure, including referral to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman).

Unacceptable actions may be considered to be a breach of tenancy conditions. Sections 3.1 and 3.6 of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (if applicable), state:

- 3.1 You, those living with you, and your visitors, must not harass or act in an anti-social manner to, or pursue a course of anti-social conduct against, any person in the neighbourhood. Such people include residents, visitors, our employees, agents and contractors and those in your property.
- 3.6 You will be in breach of this Agreement if you, those living with you, or your visitors do anything which is prohibited in this part of the Agreement.

It should be therefore considered that the actions outlined in this policy are about managing and discouraging actions to prevent tenancy failure.

2. Policy statement

This policy covers how to deal with unacceptable actions in order to protect the Langstane Group and to ensure service provision is not adversely affected by the behaviour of an individual or group of customers.

3. Objectives

This policy aims to:

- make it clear to the Group's customers, both on initial contact and throughout engagement, what the Group can and cannot do to meet their concerns and expectations
- deal fairly, honestly, consistently, and appropriately with all correspondents and complainants, even those whose behaviour or actions the Group considers unacceptable
- provide a service that is accessible to all
- ensure people who use the services of the Group and staff do not suffer disadvantage as a result of the unacceptable behaviour of others
- provide a clear consistent approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

4. Links to other strategic documents and policies

The Group's unacceptable actions policy is linked to a number of strategic documents and policies in particular but not solely:

- Allocations Policy
- Customer Care Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement
- Safeguarding Policy

5. Aggressive or abusive behaviour

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

- causes staff to feel abused or threatened, this includes non contact methods, such as undue proximity, or aggressive posturing
- may include threats, derogatory remarks or personal abuse
- is rude and haranguing
- includes inflammatory statements
- make unsubstantiated allegations.

6. Unrealistic expectations

The Group has a set of service standards in the Customer Charter, and has clear obligations and timescales set down in policies and procedures. If a customer has unrealistic expectations about what the Group can deliver, this can sometimes lead to a situation where that customer makes unreasonable demands. Demands from customers that the Group views as unacceptable include:

- expecting a response in unreasonable timescales. The Group 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
- demanding that issues already addressed are looked at again (this is an example of over use of a process)
- contacting repeatedly in respect of decisions the Group has taken, with which they disagree

7. Excessive levels of contact

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

- excessive levels of contact over a short period
- excessive, or inappropriate posting on social media platforms run by the Group
- excessively long and repetitive telephone calls
- the submission of excessive amounts of information, or multiple copies of the same or irrelevant information.

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

8. Unacceptable use of the Group's processes

Individuals have the right to pursue their concerns through a range of means. They also have the right to complain more than once about an organisation with which they have a continuing relationship, if subsequent incidents occur.

This contact becomes unreasonable when the effect of repeated complaints is to harass, or to prevent an organisation from pursuing a legitimate aim or implementing a legitimate decision. The Group considers access to a complaints system to be important and it will only be in exceptional circumstances that it would be considered that such repeated use is unacceptable; however the Group reserves the right to do so in such cases.

9. Managing unacceptable actions

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

- a) terminating telephone conversations where the staff member feels threatened or abused. Calls will only be terminated after a warning is provided to the customer
- b) allocating a Liaison Officer to the individual (this can be either a staff member or a third party. The Liaison Officer becomes the sole point of contact for an individual with the Group)
- c) restricting the contact to writing only where this is possible and practical
- d) limiting telephone contact to only certain times on certain days
- e) seeing the customer by appointment only
- f) returning any repeat or excessive correspondence and advising that future repeat correspondence will be securely disposed of

- g) in cases where a customer is contacting staff regarding an excessive range of issues, consideration will be given to a limited number of issues over a given period
- h) in serious cases, the issue of warning letters for aggressive or abusive behaviour possibly leading to legal action or banning the customer from the Group's offices
- i) in all cases where one or more of the above options is exercised, where appropriate the customer will be advised in writing of the action being taken and the reasons the decision was made.

Any action taken will be proportional and reasonable, and take into account the circumstances of the individual. Where appropriate, actions will be time limited and will be communicated to tenants and recorded on the housing management system unless the matter is of a confidential nature. Where this applies, the Customer Service Manager will be responsible for holding this information securely.

Staff who have been subject to abuse or harassment are required to report it to ensure other members of staff are protected. This is regardless of whether they wish to take forward formal action. Privacy will be maintained.

10. Staff training and resources

The Group is committed to providing staff with the support and training they require to deal with unacceptable actions from customers. This may include:

- 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.

11. Monitoring and Review

A report of how often the Unacceptable Actions Policy is used is available via the housing management system. This report is provided to the Leadership Team on an annual basis, or upon request if required more frequently.

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Right to Complain

In the event you are not satisfied with the service you have received, please contact the Group for a copy of the Complaints Policy, which can also be viewed on Langstane Housing Association's website – www.langstane-ha.co.uk.

Equality and Diversity

The Langstane Group is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all areas of work. Discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated.

If you would like this document sent to you in large print, please contact Support Services on 01224 423000.