

Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy

Responsible Officer	Assistant Director Customer Services
This policy is applicable to	Karbon Homes
Approved by	KMT
Date approved	June 2022
Frequency of review	Every 3 years
Date of next review	January 2025
Implementation date	July 2022
Key related documents (policy, procedure, customer literature)	Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Procedure and appendices. Complaints Policy Health and Safety Policy and Statement.

Version control			
Version number	1	Author of Policy	Philip Pollard
Equality Impact Analysis	Initial/Full	Equality Analysis Date	

Document change history		
Version	Date	Changed sections

Consultation	
Consultation Group (if applicable)	Date of Consultation (if applicable)
Staff	January 2022
Union(s)	Not applicable
Customers	January 2022
Human Resources / Organisation Development	Not Applicable
Health and Safety Working Group	Not applicable
Other stakeholder (please state)	Not applicable

Policy statement

This policy sets out our approach to managing customers whose actions or behaviour are considered unacceptable and outlines how we support staff. It must be read in conjunction with the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour procedure and appendices.

Risk policy is designed to control

Ensure that we safeguard the health and wellbeing of staff.

Key performance measures

- Number of incidents of unacceptable customer behaviour (no. of customers 'flagged' as displaying unacceptable behaviour).
- Number of incidents of unacceptable customer behaviour by Equality and Diversity attribute.

Definitions

See section 3.

Abbreviations

Not applicable

1.0 Purpose of policy

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to managing contact with customers whose actions or behaviour are considered unacceptable. Staff must read this in conjunction with the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour procedure and appendices.
- 1.2 Customer concerns are a valuable source of feedback and assist in improving service quality. This policy is not intended to prevent customers from raising legitimate and important concerns, enquiries or requests, or from pursuing them.
- 1.3 This policy covers all forms of contact with customers such as telephone, text, letter, email, messaging via social media or face to face contact.

NO ACTION UNDER THIS POLICY SHOULD BE TAKEN UNTIL THE CUSTOMER HAS RECEIVED A WRITTEN WARNING. THIS WARNING SHOULD ADVISE WHAT ACTION AND SANCTION WE PROPOSE TO TAKE IF THE UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR CONTINUES. THIS OFFERS THE CUSTOMER THE OPPORTUNITY TO AMEND THEIR BEHAVIOUR PRIOR TO ANY SANCTION BEING IMPOSED. THE WARNING LETTER MUST MAKE IT CLEAR WHAT THE UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR IS AND SHOULD QUOTE DATES AND TIMES OF ITS OCCURRENCE WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

2.0 Objectives

- To protect and support staff; where it is considered that a customer's actions are unacceptable we may choose to restrict or change access to any service we provide.

3.0 Policy detail

DEFINING UNACCEPTABLE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

3.1 We respect the rights of freedom of speech and rights of opinion. The actions of customers who are upset, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. It is these actions that are considered unacceptable and ones that this policy aims to manage. These actions are grouped under three broad headings:

3.2 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

3.2.1 We expect our colleagues to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards staff is unacceptable. Staff understand and are mindful of the difference between aggression and anger. It is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards staff.

3.2.2 Colleagues do not have to tolerate offensive or abusive remarks communicated to them by any form of communication.

3.2.3 Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that may cause colleagues to feel afraid, threatened or abused. Examples of behaviours grouped under this heading include:

- Threats.
- Physical violence.
- Personal verbal abuse.
- Derogatory remarks and rudeness.

3.2.4 It is also considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour. E.g. Using social media or the internet to publish unreasonable or derogatory views or opinions in relation to Karbon Homes or any linked company or member of staff.

3.2.5 Karbon Homes colleagues will always do their best to assist, but if a customer behaves or is perceived to behave in a rude, offensive, abusive, aggressive, threatening or intimidating manner they have the right to end the conversation or terminate a visit or call.

3.2.6 Where any request for information is contained within abusive correspondence, the information requested will be provided where it is appropriate to do so. However, the author of any offensive or abusive correspondence will be warned in writing that their communication is considered offensive or abusive, that it will not be further tolerated, and the action that will be taken if it does.

3.2.7 If an individual colleague does not wish to respond to a personally abusive or offensive email or other correspondence, they may refer it to their line manager to appropriately action.

3.2.8 We take any threat, intimidation or harassment of our staff, and those working with us very seriously. If it is deemed necessary, we will report any behaviour of this type to the appropriate authority (which may include the police).

3.3 Unreasonable Requests

3.3.1 It is important to note that all customers have a right to express their views in a reasonable and acceptable manner. However, customers may make what are considered to be unreasonable requests or demands, through the amount of information they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect or the number of approaches they make.

3.3.2 What amounts to unreasonable requests will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the customer. Examples of actions grouped under the heading include:

- Making unreasonable request or demands of members of staff, whether in relation to provision of information or documents, or expecting responses within an unreasonable timescale.
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff.
- An excessive number of phone calls, letters, emails or social media contact.
- Repeatedly changing the substance of an enquiry/complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- Refusing to specify or discuss the grounds of a complaint or enquiry, despite offers of assistance with this from staff.
- Refusing to co-operate with the investigation process while still wishing their concerns to be resolved.
- Refusing to accept that issues are not within our remit.
- Insisting on a complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Seeking to have staff replaced that are dealing with a complaint without sufficient grounds.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or denying statements made at an earlier stage.
- Providing trivial or irrelevant information which the customer expects to be commented on, or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all fully answered.
- Covertly recording meetings and conversations.
- Adopting a 'scattergun' approach; pursuing a concern, complaint or complaints with several different staff members at the same time.

3.3.3 Demands are considered unacceptable and unreasonable if they start taking an excessive amount of staff time to the disadvantage of other customers or functions.

3.4 Unacceptable Persistence

3.4.1 It is recognised that some customers will not or cannot accept that members of staff are unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already. Customers may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken or contact a staff member persistently about the same issue. Examples of actions grouped under this heading include:

- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of staff whilst a complaint is being looked into.

E.g. by excessive telephoning or sending emails, letters and social media messages and expecting immediate responses.

E.g. Submitting repeat complaints, after complaints processes have been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions/variations which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure.

- Persistent refusal to accept a decision made by us.
- Persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what we can or cannot do.
- Continuing to pursue a complaint without presenting any new information.

3.4.2 The way in which these customers approach us may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.

3.4.3 The actions of persistent customers are considered to be unacceptable when they take up what we consider to be a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

4.0 MANAGING UNACCEPTABLE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

4.1 Where staff are subject to unreasonable behaviour (such as verbal abuse) during a telephone call, visit or face to face interview, they will advise the customer concerned that their behaviour is unacceptable and that continued behaviour of this nature will lead to the telephone call/interview/visit being aborted.

4.2 We may then take action to restrict a customer's contact with us. Any such restrictions will be evidence based, appropriate and proportionate, and the customer will in most circumstances be advised in writing why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable, what action we are taking and its planned duration. We will also tell them that we will periodically review whether the restrictions imposed are still necessary and should remain.

4.3 Action to restrict contact can only be authorised by an appropriate Manager.

4.4 Restrictions imposed will be appropriate for the customer and proportionate. The options most likely to be considered are:

- Requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters/emails only).
- Requiring contact to take place with a named officer.
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times.
- Notifying the customer that only 'significant' and serious queries will be addressed.

4.5 Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff or customers, we will report the matter to the police or consider taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the customer prior warning of our intended actions.

4.6 A warning notification will be registered on the customer's account to ensure that staff are aware of the unacceptable customer behaviour.

- 4.7 Customers can appeal a decision to restrict contact by asking for a review by a senior officer not involved in the original decision.
- 4.8 We treat customers in a fair and non-discriminatory way, in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 4.9 We accept that some behaviour displayed by customers may be due to a vulnerability (that we may or may not be aware of).
- 4.10 We provide high quality, flexible services that are tailored to the individual needs of customers. Before taking any action under this policy we will liaise with any known support workers/providers and may liaise/work in partnership with other agencies.
- 4.11 All our correspondence is also available in a different format or language upon request.

5.0 Customer Vulnerabilities

- 5.1 This policy is applied in line with Our Approach To Vulnerability Policy. Everyone matters. We want people to be treated fairly, have equality of opportunities, freedom, respect, and access to our services. We will offer support, reasonable adjustments, and adaptations to remove barriers. We will discuss with our customers what is reasonable and appropriate. In delivering this service we may need to escalate a particular case – if we do then customer vulnerabilities will be considered as part of the decision-making process.
- 5.2 We will support people with vulnerabilities to deliver this service. We will work alongside external agencies such as social services, the police and fire services and other appropriate agencies to help and support people with vulnerabilities in the delivery of our services but also to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory requirements as a social landlord. Details are provided in the appropriate areas in this policy. All our customer policies are available on the website.

6.0 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This document will be reviewed every three years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to best practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

7.0 Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 This policy is implemented in line with the Group's Equality and Diversity Policy and associated legislation. Consideration will be given to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.
- 7.2 This policy and associated documents are available in different languages and alternative formats where necessary.

8.0 Data Protection and Privacy

- 8.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. This is

clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Homes Group which in association with the Data Protection Procedures must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.