

# Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy

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# Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy

Responsible Officer	Assistant Director Customer Experience
This policy is applicable to	All Companies
Approved by	KMT, Exec, GCC
Date Approved	17/02/2025
Frequency of review	Every 5 Years or following significant changes in guidance or legislation
Date of next review	Feb 2030
Implementation date	20th May 2025
Key related documents (policy, procedure, resident literature)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Procedure and appendices</li> <li>• Anti-Social Behaviour Policy</li> <li>• Caution Alert Policy</li> <li>• Hate Crime and Harassment Policy</li> <li>• Vulnerability Policy</li> <li>• Data Protection Policy</li> <li>• Equality and Diversity Policy</li> <li>• Lone Working Policy</li> <li>• Dignity and Respect at Work Policy</li> <li>• Karbon Group Tenancy Agreements</li> <li>• Any relevant procedure or appendices that accompany the above policies</li> </ul>
Sources of best practice or guidance used in developing this policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality Act 2010</li> <li>• Information Commissioner's Office guidance on UK GDPR</li> <li>• The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023</li> <li>• UK Equality and Human Rights Commission</li> <li>• Anti-Social Behaviour Crime &amp; Policing Act 2014</li> </ul>

<b>Version control</b>			
Version number	1	Autor of Policy	Philip Pollard
Equality Impact Assessment	Full		
Data Protection Impact Assessment			
Version Number	2	Author of Policy	Lucy Barnes
Equality Impact Assessment	Full		
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<b>Document change history</b>		
Version	Date	Changed sections

Version 2	Feb 2025	Whole policy refreshed and all sections updated
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<b>Consultation</b>	
Consultation Group (if applicable)	N/A
Colleagues	September 2024
Union(s)	N/A
Residents	October 2024
Human Resources / Organisation Development	October 2024
Health and Safety Working Group	November 2024
Data Protection	October 2024
Other stakeholder	KMT Feb 2025

<b>Policy statement</b>
This policy outlines our approach to managing customers whose actions or behaviours are deemed unacceptable and how we will support our colleagues in working with such customers.
It must be read with the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Procedure and Appendices.

<b>Risk policy is designed to control</b>
Ensure that we safeguard the health and wellbeing of our colleagues.

<b>Key performance measures</b>
TBC Once we have identified what's possible within the UCB procedure and system update - Number of warning letters sent - Reason for warning - Number of current restrictions added (active black flags) - Type of restrictions added - Number of incidents reported by incident status - History of incidents per tenant - Restrictions approaching review dates

<b>Definitions</b>	
ASB	Anti-Social behaviour - meaning "behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person"
Colleagues	Any person employed by or carrying out work on behalf of Karbon Homes Group
Customers	<p>Any person who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has used our services in the past</li> <li>• is currently using our services</li> <li>• has submitted an application to be housed in a Karbon Homes property; (each a 'direct customer') and</li> <li>• any third parties acting on behalf of a direct customer,</li> <li>• members of a direct customer's family or household, including children</li> <li>• anyone living with or visiting a direct customer where the direct customer is reasonably responsible for such a person's behaviour on the property, communal areas, or the local area.</li> </ul>
CRM	Customer Relationship Management – The system Karbon use to record customer information and interactions
Karbon Homes Group	Any subsidiary or associated company of Karbon Homes Limited
Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP)	This is a legal notice stating our intention to commence legal proceedings to recover possession of a dwelling specifying the legal grounds for doing so. A NOSP may specify multiple grounds for seeking possession where appropriate, e.g. ASB, rent arrears, or other breaches of the tenancy agreement.
Injunction	<p>A civil court order that either prohibits someone from doing particular things or requires them to do particular things. Injunctions can be applied for due to breach of contract and/or if relating to antisocial behaviour under legislation such as the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. For some applications Karbon can request the Court add a term prohibiting a person from entering particular property or an area (an exclusion order) and/or request that a power of arrest be attached to terms of an Order.</p> <p>Breach of an injunction would be found to be Contempt of Court and can be punished by a custodial sentence or a fine or both.</p>
Services	Any services offered from time to time by the Karbon Homes Group, including but not limited to the provision of housing for sale or rent

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## 1.0 **Purpose of policy**

- 1.1 It is Karbon's aim to treat all customers fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately, including those whose actions may be considered unacceptable under this policy. We recognise that all customers have a right to be heard, understood and respected.
- 1.2 Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of customers using our services or supporting others to do so can make it difficult for us to carry out our duties. In a small number of cases, the actions of individuals become unacceptable because they cause upset and distress to our colleagues or interfere with their ability to carry out their day to day jobs, which in turn may affect the delivery of our services.
- 1.3 When this happens, we must take action to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of our colleagues, 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 services to others. We do note that we have duties towards our residents as well as our employees.
- 1.4 This policy explains how we will approach these situations.
- 1.5 The policy applies to customers' behaviour wherever they are, whether in their homes, the local area, our offices or elsewhere. It covers unacceptable behaviour in all areas of our work and all methods of contact, including telephone, face to face, letters, email, social media, and other digital platforms.

## **2.0 Objectives**

- 2.1 To protect and support colleagues when it is considered that a customer's actions and / or behaviour are unacceptable.
- 2.2 To prevent unacceptable behaviour of individual customers from impacting Karbon's ability to provide an appropriate level of service to its customers.
- 2.3 To clarify what actions we consider unacceptable and the actions we may take to protect colleagues and customers.
- 2.4 To ensure that all actions are proportionate to the circumstances surrounding the unacceptable behaviour. We will consider any disabilities, health conditions and reasonable adjustments (as set out in section 4.0 of this Policy) to ensure we provide all customers with a fair and proportionate service.

## **3.0 Policy Detail**

### **3.1 Defining unacceptable customer behaviour**

- 3.2 We respect the rights of freedom of speech and right of opinion.
- 3.3 We understand that individuals may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may be circumstances leading up to a customer contacting us that will have put them in vulnerable circumstances.
- 3.4 Customers may also have disabilities, health conditions or require reasonable adjustments (see sections 4.0 and 5.0 of this policy). Any disability, health condition will be taken into consideration when we review any action we might take to manage unacceptable behaviour.
- 3.5 Karbon Homes Group will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour or actions from customers that result in unacceptable or excessive demands on our service. We reserve the right to consider each incident on its own merit if it prevents colleagues from carrying out their duties effectively and negatively impacts their wellbeing. It is these behaviours that we aim to manage under this policy.

### **Unreasonable requests and demands**

- 3.6 All customers have the right to express their views reasonably and appropriately. However, customers may make what are considered to be unreasonable requests or demands through the volume of information they are requesting, the nature and scale of service they expect or the number of approaches they make.
- 3.7 Examples of what would be considered unreasonable include:
  - Unreasonable demand - requesting large volumes of information, asking for responses within a short period of time, refusing to speak to an individual colleague or insisting on speaking to another individual colleague.

- Unreasonable persistence – refusing to accept the answer that has been provided, continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence, continuously adding to or changing the subject matter of the complaint.
- Verbal abuse, aggression or violence (see 3.19 to 3.26 of this policy below)
- Overload of letters, calls, emails or contact via social media (this could include the frequency of contact as well as the volume of correspondence received as well as the frequency and length of telephone calls).

3.8 A request or demand becomes unreasonable when receiving the information or carrying out the actions:

- Takes an excessive amount of colleague time.
- Disadvantages the service we can provide other customers.
- Prevents us from dealing with the request or demand in a timely way.

3.9 Examples of unacceptable behaviour grouped under this heading can include but are not limited to:

- Repeatedly not approaching the relevant point of contact.
- Demanding support or involvement from a specific colleague or refusing to engage with an appropriate member of staff.
- Asking for excessive amounts of information.
- Expecting responses in an unreasonable time or a time outside of our policy.
- Asking for detailed responses not linked to the original request.
- Refusing to accept that issues are not within our remit.
- Insisting matters are dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Denying statements made throughout the investigation process.

#### Unacceptable levels of contact or persistence

3.10 Sometimes, the volume and duration of contact made to our services by a customer is unacceptable. This can occur over a short period of time or over the life span of an enquiry.

3.11 We recognise that some customers will not or cannot accept that colleagues are unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than what has already been provided.

3.12 The manner and tone in which these customers approach us may be entirely reasonable, but their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so may not be.

3.13 Excessive contact can include written, verbal, digital or in person contact (e.g. visiting one of our offices).

3.14 Examples of unacceptable behaviour grouped under this heading include but are not limited to:

- Contacting multiple people on the same matter.

- Excessive contact over a short period of time, for example, a high number of calls in one day or week.
- Unnecessarily or excessively copying colleagues into emails to other parties.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of colleagues, for example, expecting immediate responses, responses out of working hours, or outside of service level agreements.
- High volumes of information or contact about the same issues.
- Submitting repeat complaints or enquiries already dealt with, stating that adding information makes them a new complaint.
- Continuing to pursue a complaint or enquiry without presenting any new information.
- Persistent refusal to accept a decision made by us after explanations, relevant appeals and escalation process have been exhausted.
- Persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what we can or cannot do where explanations have been provided.

### Refusal to co-operate

3.15 Sometimes, a customer repeatedly refuses to co-operate, making it difficult for us to fulfil their request for service or our duty as a landlord. However, we understand there may be valid reasons why a customer can't or won't engage with us and we will always offer support, reasonable adjustments, and adaptations to remove barriers. We will discuss with our customers what is reasonable and appropriate on an individual basis.

3.16 When investigating a customer enquiry or complaint, we may ask the individual who enquired to provide further information, evidence, or comments. We may also ask for their help in summarising their concerns or issues.

3.17 Without good cause, it is unacceptable to bring a request for service or an enquiry to us and then not respond to appropriate and relevant requests for further information in relation to that request or enquiry by colleagues.

3.18 Examples of unacceptable behaviour grouped under this heading include but are not limited to:

- Not responding to calls, emails or letters reasonably requesting further information.
- Without good cause, not attending pre-arranged meetings giving no or very short cancellation notice.
- Failing to supply further information, evidence, or comments in a reasonable time and after numerous requests.
- Failure to do any of the above after reasonable adjustments have been made to support the individual in doing so.
- Refusing to specify or discuss the grounds of a complaint or enquiry despite offers of assistance from colleagues.
- Refusing to co-operate with the investigation process while still wishing their concerns to be resolved.

- Refusing to co-operate with reasonable requests to view, investigate or repair their home whilst still pursuing service requests or raising concerns about their home.

### Violence, Aggressive or Abusive behaviour

3.19 We expect our colleagues to be treated with courtesy and respect. Our colleagues understand and are mindful of the difference between aggression and anger.

Expressions of anger could include but are not limited to

- Shouting, raising your voice
- Slamming doors or objects
- Swearing to express anger at a situation

3.20 Examples of aggressive behaviour that could be described as severe unacceptable customer behaviour could include but are not limited to:

- **Physical violence:** actions which intentionally or recklessly cause another person to suffer or apprehend immediate unlawful violence. This could be physical contact such as biting, hitting, and kicking or actions causing someone to fear violence.
- **Verbal hostility:** Sending threatening messages through emails, phone calls or social media messages, making threats against someone's life, shouting, and swearing directly at someone
- **Nonverbal intimidation:** such as making threatening gestures, sending unwanted gifts, and sexual harassment.
- **Destruction of property:** breaking someone's laptop or phone and other acts of vandalism.

It is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards colleagues and will not be tolerated.

3.21 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 colleagues to feel offended, afraid, threatened or abused. Violence or abuse towards colleagues is unacceptable.

3.22 Colleagues will not tolerate offensive or abusive remarks when interacting with customers. If a colleague feels scared or threatened at any point during an interaction with a customer, which could be face to face, over the phone or through digital platforms, email, and social media exchanges, colleagues have the right to take the necessary steps to protect and remove themselves from a situation.

3.23 Examples of unacceptable behaviours grouped under this heading include but are not limited to:

- Threats
- Physical Violence
- Personal verbal abuse
- Derogatory remarks and rudeness
- Unacceptable language, such as language, which is offensive, derogatory or patronising

- Discriminatory language or conduct which may be deemed as racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic by the recipient.

3.24 We also consider inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations abusive behaviour. For example, using social media or the internet to publish untrue or defamatory views or opinions concerning Karbon Homes Group, our colleagues, or linked companies will not be tolerated.

3.25 We take any threat, intimidation, or harassment of our colleagues and those working with us very seriously. If necessary, as well as initiating measures detailed within this policy, we will also report any behaviour of this type to the appropriate authority, which may include the police.

3.26 For full guidance on how Karbon will deal with violent, aggressive or abusive behaviour please refer to its Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

## Harassment

3.27 Harassment arises when a colleague is subject to unwanted conduct that has the purpose or the effect of:

- Violating the colleague's dignity
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment

3.28 Conduct that has one of these effects can be harassment, even if the effect was not intended. Unwanted conduct covers a wide range of behaviours. It can include:

- Spoken words
- Written words
- Banter
- Posts or contact on social media
- Imagery
- Physical gestures
- Facial expressions
- Mimicry
- Jokes or pranks
- Acts affecting a person's surroundings
- Aggression
- Physical behaviour towards a person or their property

3.29 Our colleagues have the right to carry out their duties without being subjected to hate crimes, harassment, or threats. Examples of unacceptable behaviour grouped under this heading are included below but are not limited to:

- Recording telephone discussions or making videos without consent, sharing with others, or publishing the information on any social media or other public platforms.
- Contacting colleagues using their personal details or via social media

- Publishing personal, sensitive, or private information about colleagues online or in other public domains such as noticeboards, newsletters, and social media groups
- Approaching colleagues outside of their work for Karbon Homes Group with enquiries. For example, at home, while on public transport or during leisure activities like shopping
- Making serious allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt or perverse conduct without evidence

3.30 Discrimination of any kind that is protected by the Equality Act 2010 or defined as a hate crime will not be tolerated. This includes and is not limited to:

- Incidents, acts or comments which are racist, homophobic, transphobic, or derogatory to people with disabilities or chronic conditions
- Conduct of a sexual nature defined as sexual harassment such as sexual comments or jokes, propositions and sexual advances, sexual gestures, intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life, sending sexually explicit messages, unwelcome touching

3.31 For guidance on how Karbon will detail with hate crimes and harassment, please refer to our Hate Crime and Harassment policy.

#### **4.0 Disabilities, health conditions and reasonable adjustments**

4.1 Customers should, where possible, make us aware of any disabilities and health conditions so that these can be accurately recorded on their customer records. Awareness of disabilities and health conditions via customer records can support colleagues across our business to respond to requests for service in an appropriate way.

4.2 If customers have a disability or health condition that can affect how they act or present themselves to others, they should let us know as soon as possible. For example, conditions such as autism and Tourette's can be made worse in difficult or stressful situations. Alcoholism and substance misuse can also cause customers to act in an unacceptable way. We can support customers and will always consider making reasonable adjustments for a customer in line with legislation.

4.2 In order to consider or apply a reasonable adjustment, we will ask customers to explain what adjustments they're looking for and how the adjustment will ensure they can access our services.

4.3 Examples of adjustments we can consider are found below but are not limited to:

- Using different methods of communication
- Working with a support service or representative that the customer suggests
- Providing written communication in large print, coloured text, or in translation
- Giving clear warnings if conversations become unproductive and allowing customers the opportunity to change their behaviour before ending an interaction.

4.5 Disabilities, health conditions, and reasonable adjustments will be taken into consideration when reviewing any action that we consider. We may still use the terms in this policy if some actions or behaviours have a negative effect on our colleagues or on delivering our services where reasonable adjustments have already been made.

## **5.0 Our Approach to vulnerability**

5.1 This policy is applied in line with 'Our Approach to Vulnerability' Policy. Everyone Matters. We want everyone 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.

5.2 We will support people with vulnerabilities to deliver our services. 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 service but also to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory requirements as a social landlord.

5.3 For more information and guidance, please refer to our Approach to Vulnerability policy.

## **6.0 Actions we may take to manage unacceptable behaviour**

6.1 Where a customer is behaving unacceptably as defined within the "Unacceptable requests and demands" or "Unacceptable levels of contact or persistence at paragraphs 3.10 to 3.14 of this Policy, we will try to reach a voluntary agreement with the customer before taking formal action. This is to allow the customer time to consider and adjust their behaviour.

6.2 If the informal approach does not succeed, then we may consider restrict contact as follows:

- Providing a single point of contact.
- Limiting contact to a single form, i.e. to writing, email or telephone only.
- Limiting contact to certain times or to a limited number of times per week or month.
- Declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless any additional evidence of information is provided.
- Only considering a certain number of issues in a specific period.

6.3 We will follow our Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Procedure when considering whether it is necessary to limit contact as above. This procedure provides a review period and an appeals process if the customer does not agree with the restrictions put in place on contact.

6.4 Mediation will be considered and offered in appropriate cases using a third party mediation service.

6.5 In extreme cases involving threats of violence, physical violence or harassment towards a colleague, action could involve taking legal action without notice to the customer and ending direct contact with the customer.

6.6 Some examples of unacceptable customer behaviour we have listed in this policy could be defined as severe, and therefore, we would take a quicker route to manage such behaviour through our other policies, such our Anti-Social behaviour policy or the Hate Crime and Harassment policy. The restrictions we may apply could include but is not limited to:

- Restricting contact without warning the customer first.
- Escalating the incident to our community safety team and referring to our Caution Alert, Anti-Social Behaviour policies or our Hate Crime and Harassment policy.
- Reporting instances of unacceptable behaviour to the police or other appropriate public authorities when needed.

6.7 If despite the restrictions in place, the unacceptable behaviour continues towards colleagues then Karbon may consider taking legal action, including application for an injunction or seeking possession following service of an appropriate NOSP.

## **7.0 Monitoring and Review**

7.1 This document will be reviewed every five years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to best practices or regulatory or legislative requirements.

## **8.0 Equality and Diversity**

8.1 This policy is applied in line with our Inclusion and Belonging Policy. This includes the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

8.2 At Karbon we aim to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations, and define the nine protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

8.3 All of our customer policies are available on the website.

8.4 If you would like this or any other policies in different language or format please contact [inclusion@karbonhomes.co.uk](mailto:inclusion@karbonhomes.co.uk).

## **9.0 Data Protection and Privacy**

9.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and other associated legislation. This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Homes Group which, along with its associated procedures, must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.