



North Devon Homes

Reasonable Behaviour Policy

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The Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the responsibilities and obligations placed upon North Devon Homes to deal with customers in a professional and polite manner at all times but also sets out the expectations and safeguards that we place on customers to support this. It describes how NDH will approach customers whose actions or behaviour we consider to be offensive, inappropriate or potentially present as a danger to staff or our assets.

This policy aims:

- To deal with customers fairly, honestly, consistently, professionally and appropriately including customers whose actions we deem to be unreasonable without detriment to services
- To make it clear to customers what NDH is able or unable to do and in doing so be open and honest so as not to raise hopes and expectations that we are unable to meet.
- To balance customer need and the resources we have to serve all customers fairly and reasonably

This policy promotes reasonable behaviour by defining what is unreasonable and explaining how we will act when this is the case.

NDH want staff to work within a framework without intimidation, threats or harassment but recognise that customers may be dealing with significant issues or challenges. NDH will aim to work with customers to balance the safety and security of NDH staff whilst supporting the customer in their communication with us.

2. Principles

The following principles will apply to this policy:

- It will be open, fair and transparent
- It will reflect the current standards of operation and will be reviewed whenever industry standards, legislation or guidelines change

- It will promote consistency in the approach to the repairs and maintenance services
- It will be used to provide a framework to inform and train staff, customers and board members on how response repairs are managed in the company
- It will be realistic, achievable and provide value for money
- It will support the corporate vision, values, objectives and service standards.

3. Review

We will review this policy, procedures and staff training needs at least once every 2 years to ensure that it continues to operate within best practice, achieve measurable results, and achieve continuous service improvement.

Alternatively, the policy and all associated procedures will be reviewed immediately following any relevant change to government policy, regulation, legislation or following an incident that shows a gap in the policy.

The Head of Customer and Housing Services will be responsible for ensuring that policy reviews are undertaken, that appropriate consultation takes place and that revisions are reported to the Executive Team for its approval.

4. Responsibility

The Executive Team will approve this policy under delegated authority from the Board. The Head of Customer and Housing Services will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented.

The Head of Customer and Housing Services is responsible for ensuring that staff training is provided and that staff understand the wider issues surrounding this policy, its applications and the procedure.

5. Scope

This policy deals with behaviours displayed to any NDH staff members or contractors working on our behalf whilst going about their work duties, with the exclusion of the Youth Team whilst dealing with Young persons, which is dealt with in a separate document.

The following areas of behaviours are covered by this policy:

- Verbal abuse or aggression
- Threatening or actual physical violence or harassment
- Persistent contact or unreasonable demands
- Appeals to Unreasonable Behaviour Sanctions

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Verbal abuse or aggression

NDH will not tolerate verbal abuse or aggression towards its staff members. This behaviour can be made verbally, in writing; or any electronic or digital format e.g. via social media.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour may include:

- Threats of violence towards staff; contractors or other customers
- Personal verbal abuse towards staff; contractors or other customers
- Derogatory or offensive remarks towards staff; contractors or other customers
- Rudeness towards staff; contractors or other customers
- Behaviour or language (whether written or oral) that may cause staff / contractors / other customers to feel intimidated, threatened or abused.
- Remarks regarding a person's protected characteristics
- Offensive language generally

We will end telephone calls or other conversations if a customer is considered to be aggressive, abusive, or offensive, but will do this in a way that is professional and polite. We will make use of telephone recordings to assist us in this assessment.

We will delete, report or block messages, which are considered to be abusive and communicated through social media.

We will also use the recording facility on the lone working security devices if a customer demonstrates the behaviours above when our staff are away from our offices.

If a customer continues to demonstrate inappropriate behaviours, then we will consider the following course of action;

- We may restrict a person's contact with our office. We will aim to do this in a way which still allows access to our services.
- We may ask that future contact is via another household member or third party unless in an emergency situation
- We may assign a customer a single point of contact or restrict access to our office in person.
- We may note a warning against the person's record in our database so staff are aware of any issues.

Any actions that are decided upon will be notified in writing to the customer involved and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

6.2 Use or Threat of physical violence or harassment

NDH will not tolerate the use or threat of physical violence or harassment and will implement measure to prevent this. We will end telephone calls or other conversations if a customer is perceived to act or threatens to act in a violent manner or in a way which is felt to constitute harassment or intimidating.

Use or threat of physical violence or harassment may include;

- Threat of physical violence against a staff member or contractor or assets of NDH or a contractor, whether in person or communicated verbally or in writing.
- Actual physical violence including any contact such as pushing.
- Invasion of someone's personal space, or intimidating behaviour.
- Pursuing someone when they are trying to retreat from a situation.

Any of the above behaviours is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the customer. Incidents may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

We will use any written or recorded telephone calls or recorded interactions with the customer as evidence. We will delete, report or block messages containing threats through social media.

We will notify customers that if the behaviour is replicated that we may require future contact to be through another household member or third party unless in an emergency situation. We will note a warning against the person's record in our database so staff are aware of any issues.

Any actions that are decided upon will be notified in writing to the customer involved and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

If the behaviour is further replicated or is serious in nature we may take action against a tenancy.

6.3 Persistent contact or unreasonable demands

NDH recognises that some customers will not or cannot accept that NDH is 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 in relation to their situation or contact NDH persistently about the same issue.

Persistent Contact or unreasonable demands may include:

- Persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a situation or to accept explanations relating to what we are able or unable to do. This may be a decision that has been addressed through our complaints process.
- Continuing to pursue an allegation without presenting any new information.
- Making unfounded, vexatious claims where there is no independent supporting evidence
- Demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale that our outside of our service standards
- Unreasonable expectations that are not part of our service offer to customers
- Refusal to leave the office premises
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff or refusing to deal with a member of staff that is allocated to them.
- Continual phone calls, emails, letters or visits to the offices
- Repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.

- Being obstructive when a reasonable solution has been proposed or offered

The way in which these customers approach NDH may be entirely reasonable; but their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so is not.

Whilst we understand that there are factors that can cause the behaviours described above, such as the desire to move; we need to balance the demands from all of our customers and to ensure that we are providing a fair and consistent service. We will work closely with these customers to agree a means of communicating that meets their needs but reduces the disproportionate amount of time and resources that they may take up.

If a customer continues to demonstrate the behaviours above, then we will consider the following course of action:

- Where someone has a health condition that might contribute to such behaviour we may seek to arrange appropriate support or act via a third party where appropriate.
- We may introduce regular contact points where we will contact the customer to check in with them for all issues other than emergency situations. This may be in person or over the phone
- We may restrict the way in which the customer communicates with us e.g. no visits to the office or require the customer to make an appointment to see staff before visiting the office.
- We may inform the customer that we will not respond to any communications around an issue if there is no new information provided and we have exhausted our complaints process. This means that we may terminate phone calls early or not respond to written communication.
 - We may signpost a customer to a third party for assistance or advice, e.g. environmental health
 - We may assign a customer with a single point on contact so that they have a more consistent approach to their issues.
 - We may ask that future contact is via another household member or third party unless in an emergency situation.
 - We may block messages through social media routes.
 - We may note a warning against the persons in our database to define the measures implemented.

Any actions that are decided upon will be notified in writing to the customer involved and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

6.4 Appeals to Unreasonable Behaviour Sanctions

We will allow customer to appeal any decisions that we have taken as a result of any behaviours displayed.

If a customer wishes to appeal against a decision and the measures taken to restrict their access to staff, they may do so by contacting the Head of Customer and Housing Services and a Director will review the decision and write to the customer with the outcome of their decision.

The outcomes of this appeal will represent the final view of the Company. Any dispute with a decision will not normally be considered as part of the Company's internal complaint procedure.

Where a customer wishes to pursue the issue we will support them by providing contact details for the Housing Ombudsman and will provide timely and accurate information to the Housing Ombudsman as required.

7. Consultation

NDH will consult customers, Customer Board Partnership and other groups in relation to the repairs service. This could include mystery shopping, reviewing our publications and communications with customers and helping us to shape our repairs offer.

Some of the consultation will be through established customer groups, but we will also endeavour to widen out the numbers of customer engaged through the use of social media, surveys and focus groups

8. Equality Impact Assessment

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all customers of NDH and in compliance with the Single Equality Act 2010 which recognises the "protected characteristics" as: gender, transgender, race, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexuality, age, religion and belief.

To this end an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy and is attached as Appendix A.

We undertake to produce this document or parts of it on request in other languages or formats such as large print to ensure that everyone is able to access the policy.

Language Line provides all corporate translation services and they may be contacted on 0800 169 2879.

We are committed to the principles of fairness and respect at NDH and therefore seek to embed statutory guidance and policy relating to Equality and Diversity into all activities.

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment form

1. Policy Name

Reasonable Behaviour Policy

2. Aims of the Policy being assessed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make it clear to customers what NDH is able or unable to do and in doing so be open and honest so as not to raise hopes and expectations that we are unable to meet. • To deal with customers fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately including customers whose actions we deem to be unreasonable without detriment to the services we provide • To balance the need and resources targeted at all of our customers
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3. Who has been consulted in developing the SPPF?

Date	Consultation methodology	Challenge/impact/result
	All Teams and Managers	To ensure application is consistent and practical
	Executive Team	
	Solicitors	Check legal obligations
	Ombudsman	Check best practice
	SSIG	Customer Opinion – see section on further work for suggestions
	Customer Board Partnership & specific customer focus groups	Customer views on approach – fairness?

4. Identify potential impact on each of the diversity “groups”

Strand	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Comments/evidence
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Disability			<input type="checkbox"/>	We must ensure that we are aware of any disability issues, in particular mental health problem.
	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Gender Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Rural issues		<input type="checkbox"/>		Access and communication is restricted however we do not envisage service delivery will be affected
Social Inclusion issues	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>			

5. Does the Policy promote equality of opportunity?

We are committed to the principles of fairness and fostering good relations between people sharing a protected characteristic and people who don't. This policy is based on a person's behaviour and not their protected characteristics.

6. If "adverse impact" identified in table above, is it?

The adverse impact is in regard to communication and the removal of telephone communication may cause difficulties for those living in rural areas. Where a telephone service is withdrawn as a result of unacceptable behaviour, then the customer must nominate a point of contact for cases of emergency.

7. A full EIA is not required for this policy.

There is a possibility that people with Disabilities, and in particular, mental health problems, will be treated with more tolerance than those without. It is important to establish whether or not the illness has the ability to affect the behaviour in the manner displayed or if the person accused of being aggressive or unreasonable is using the disability as a means of excusing their unacceptable behaviour.

A log will be kept of everyone whose behaviour is deemed to be unacceptable and this will be reviewed at the end of one year's operation, to examine for any trends or difficulties that might arise as a result of the implementation of this policy.

8. If suggestions for improvement have been suggested, what should the positive outcome be for North Devon Homes' customers and stakeholders?

Review/new EIA (date or timeframe)	Next review August 2025
Name of person/s completing form	Head of Customer and Housing Services
Date assessment completed	16 August 2022
Name (and signature) of manager approving	Executive Team 1 September 2022