



Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

Note: There may be some adjustments made to this SHA policy in line with the latest UK Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code of April 2024.

Introduction

At Spitalfields Housing Association (SHA), our mission is to enhance the quality of life for our residents. We value all feedback, whether positive, neutral, or negative as it provides us with the opportunity to learn, adapt, and improve our services. We understand that certain situations can be frustrating and may cause customers to speak or act in ways that aren't typical for them.

Purpose

SHA is committed to operating an open and accountable feedback system. This policy outlines the behaviour expected from SHA customers in line with their tenancy agreement. While we take all concerns seriously and strive to respond fairly and promptly, we also expect our staff to be treated with mutual respect and courtesy.

Scope

The UK Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) recommends that housing providers, such as SHA, implement policies to manage situations where individuals exhibit unacceptable behaviour. Such behaviour can be challenging for staff and may disproportionately consume valuable time and resources.

Definition of Unacceptable Behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- **Unreasonable demands:** for example, requesting excessive volumes of information, expecting responses within an unreasonably short timeframe, or insisting on communicating only with specific staff members.
- **Unreasonable persistence:** such as refusing to accept a final decision, repeatedly raising the same issue without presenting new evidence, or constantly changing the nature of a complaint.
- **Verbal abuse, aggression or violence:** including not only physical threats or verbal assaults, but also derogatory remarks, rudeness, and inflammatory or threatening statements.
- **Excessive contact:** such as persistent letters, phone calls, emails, or social media contact that is disproportionate in volume or frequency.

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Abusive contact

It is important to distinguish between anger and abuse. Customers are entitled to express dissatisfaction and share their concerns, including feelings of anger, provided this is done respectfully. However, it is not acceptable for such emotions to manifest as aggression or abuse.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour may include:

- Threats or actual violence
- Personal abuse or discriminatory comments
- Vandalism of SHA-owned or managed properties
- Repeated shouting, swearing, or hostile language
- Inflammatory statements or unfounded accusations

Such behaviour may occur in person, by telephone, email, or through other communication channels.

Impact on service delivery

SHA will assess the situation and take appropriate steps to protect staff and to maintain service standards. Abuse of any kind will not be tolerated. Unacceptable behaviour can negatively impact how staff are able to respond to you and may even affect their health and wellbeing at work. This, in turn, can lead to delays in service and hinder the resolution of any issues. SHA staff are here to help resolve any issues, and can do so more effectively when your concerns are communicated clearly, your desired outcome is specified, and your message is conveyed in a concise and respectful manner within a reasonable timeframe.

Unacceptable behaviour towards staff

A list of unacceptable forms of behaviour towards staff, but not limited to:

- Any behaviour or language (spoken or written) that could cause employees to feel offended, intimidated, threatened, or abused
- Derogatory or discriminatory comments, including those that are racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, or transphobic
- The use of insulting, degrading, or inappropriate language

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- Making serious accusations against the organisation or individuals without supporting evidence
- Sharing or publishing personal information about employees online, including on social media platforms
- Recording or publishing conversations with employees, such as phone calls without their knowledge or consent
- Using employees' personal contact details or reaching out to them via their social media accounts

Equality, diversity, and reasonable adjustments

SHA staff are expected to act in line with the Equality Act 2010 and to demonstrate due consideration for individuals with medical conditions, mental health needs, or learning disabilities. Any restrictions placed on a customer's contact will take into account their specific needs and circumstances.

Customers must inform SHA of any changes in their circumstances, such as changes to their benefits, personal health, or housing situation. Where possible, supporting documentation should be provided. This enables SHA to offer tailored services and to implement any necessary reasonable adjustments.

Managing unacceptable behaviour

To help manage unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour, we may apply the following contact restrictions:

- Require communication to be in writing or via a representative
- Decide not to investigate a complaint if it is pursued in an unacceptable or unreasonable manner
- Limit or stop all communication with the individual
- Restrict or control how and when contact is made with us

For behaviour that threatens the immediate safety of our employees or others, we may also:

- Contact emergency services and/or the landlord
- Report harmful or threatening content on social media to platform moderators

If we consider someone's behaviour unreasonable (due to excessive contact or demands) or unacceptable, we will first try to resolve the issue. We will explain our concerns and give the individual an opportunity to change their behaviour so we can continue handling the case.

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If the issue continues, an SHA Senior Management Team (SMT) member will review the situation. If a behaviour restriction is imposed, we will explain the reason and terms in writing.

Restrictions typically last 12 months. If a threat is made to the safety of staff, others, or an organisation, we will report it to the Metropolitan Police, and to the local authority, if appropriate.

We aim to inform the individual if such a report is made. However, there may be times when this is not possible, such as if the call ends abruptly or if informing them could affect an investigation.

Recording and reviewing restrictions

Details of any managed behaviour restriction will be recorded in our case management system for the duration of the case(s) or the restriction period. Once the case is closed or the restriction ends, the information will be removed in line with data protection regulations.

If a restriction remains in place beyond 12 months, it will be reviewed by an SMT member. During the review, all recorded information will be checked and updated or deleted if it is no longer accurate.

Reconsideration of a managed behaviour restriction

Customers may request a review of a managed behaviour restriction under the following circumstances:

- There has been a change in circumstances that makes the restriction no longer appropriate
- There is evidence that the restriction is adversely affecting the customer's ability to access our services
- A factual error was made by SHA when the decision to apply the restriction was taken

An SMT member will review the request and determine whether any changes to the restriction are warranted. The outcome is expected to be communicated to the customer within 15 working days of the request being received.

Legal remedies

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If restrictions on contact are put in place and not respected, SHA may refer the matter to our legal team to explore legal options for managing continued unacceptable behaviour. In cases where such behaviour constitutes abuse or breaches the terms of tenancy, SHA may open an anti-social behaviour (ASB) or tenancy breach case as appropriate.

Examples of good behavioural practice

- Be respectful and polite: use courteous language and a calm tone.
- Stay calm: avoid shouting or interrupting.
- Be clear: explain your issue briefly and stick to the facts.
- Listen: allow the officer to speak and follow their guidance.
- Ask politely: request clarification if needed.
- Be honest: provide accurate information.
- Respect boundaries: use official channels and avoid personal remarks.
- Be patient: understand that processes take time.
- Show appreciation: A simple “thank you” helps maintain goodwill.

Can this policy be improved?

SHA exercises a ‘continuous improvement’ approach to their policies and welcomes feedback so that we can improve services for our residents. If you would like to suggest changes to this policy, email admin@spitalfieldsha.co.uk

We refer to the resident, tenant or customer meaning a person residing in an SHA-managed property.

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