

# Managing Customer Contact Policy

Wrexham County Borough Council

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 Wrexham Council offers a service where excellent customer care is at the forefront of all we do; where we work to raise awareness of our service and do our best to make it accessible to all and easy to use, making reasonable adjustments if necessary. We aim to deliver a high quality complaints handling service, which considers and determines complaints thoroughly, but proportionately and conveys decisions clearly.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how contact with customers/residents may be managed in the very small number of cases where the actions or behaviour of a person challenges our ability to deliver an effective service to all.
- 1.3 The core aims of the policy are to ensure equity and fairness, improve efficiency and manage risks to the health and safety of staff. It applies to all areas of work undertaken by this office where members of staff have contact with any customer by phone or in writing (including electronic communication). The term complainant means anyone who has made a complaint to this office or any other person acting on their behalf.
- 1.4 All customers will be treated with fairness and respect even if we perceive actions or behaviour to be challenging. The Council will always separate the way we may need to manage contact with a person from the way we deal with their complaint.

## **2. AGGRESSIVE, ABUSIVE OR OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR**

- 2.1 Our staff have the right to work in an environment free from aggressive, abusive or offensive language or behaviour at all times.
- 2.2 Wrexham Council considers such behaviour to include (but not limited to):
- swearing or abusive language
  - over-bearing behaviour; refusing to give staff an opportunity to speak or repeated derogatory comments
  - inappropriate sexual or gender-based remarks
  - inappropriate cultural, racial, political or religious references
  - rudeness or shouting
  - threatening behaviour
  - emotional abuse or manipulative behaviour
- 2.3 Threats of physical violence or harassment to any person are unacceptable and will be reported to the police.

## **3. UNREASONABLE DEMANDS AND PERSISTENCE**

- 3.1 Wrexham Council is committed to providing a proportionate amount of time and resources to each customer. Unreasonable demands and persistence may prevent staff from fulfilling this commitment.
- 3.2 Wrexham Council considers such behaviour to include (but not limited to):
- excessive telephone calls, emails, letters, online reports or office visits
  - sending duplicate correspondence
  - persistent refusal to accept a decision or explanation
  - continuing to contact the Council after a decision, about the same or similar matters, without presenting new or relevant information

- demanding responses within an unreasonable time scale or information not relevant to your complaint
- refusing to cooperate with the Council's complaint handling procedures
- raising matters that are immaterial to the complaint or repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint
- repeatedly contacting or insisting to speak to a member of staff who is not directly dealing with the issue

## **4. TERMINATING A TELEPHONE CALL**

- 4.1 Wrexham Council staff may terminate a call if subjected to the behaviours outlined in sections 2 and 3. Before taking this action, the caller will be warned once that their conduct is of concern, to allow them the opportunity to moderate their behaviour. If the behaviour persists, no further warnings will be given and the call will be terminated.
- 4.2 The member of staff who terminates a call will report it to their line manager. Following a terminated call, if the person makes further contact and the behaviour has not changed, the line manager may restrict telephone contact for a period of time. This decision will be recorded and communicated at the earliest opportunity to all staff taking frontline calls.
- 4.3 In the event that the customer does not modify their behaviour, further consideration will be given to formally managing contact between the customer and the Council.

## 5. MANAGING CONTACT

- 5.1 In the very small number of cases where the actions or behaviour of a customer challenges our ability to deliver an effective service to all, as set out above, the relevant Manager will make a decision around managing contact and convey this to the customer.
- 5.2 Wrexham Council may (amongst other considerations) manage the contact by:
- limiting contact to a particular form for example, the customer may be limited to contacting the Council by email or letter only
  - limiting telephone calls to specific days and/or times
  - arranging for a single point of contact for all future correspondence
  - an agreed behaviour contract, setting out what is expected of the customer, to be signed by the customer
  - blocking telephone calls and/or emails being received
  - advising the customer that their correspondence will be read to ensure no new issues are raised, but will then be filed or destroyed without acknowledgement
- 5.3 Wherever possible, the Council will endeavour to ensure that at least one line of contact will remain available.
- 5.4 Decisions on how to manage contact are made on a case by case basis. This will be done where staff are finding behaviour unusually challenging or difficult to manage, and generally where this is exhibited on more than one occasion. For example, where:
- staff are struggling to be heard, or feel upset, threatened, bullied or belittled by the contacts
  - the contact is sexist, racist, culturally inappropriate etc
  - a caller demands disproportionate time is spent relative to the circumstances of the complaint or issue, or makes unreasonable demands for action by the Council
  - there is repetitive contact that is not merited in the circumstances of the case
  - there are disproportionate threats of contacting other bodies, taking legal action etc
  - the customer is highly needy, emotionally demanding, or appears to be becoming dependent on certain members of staff
  - there are repeated challenges to decisions

## 6. APPEALING AND REVIEWING A DECISION

- 6.1 The decision to manage contact with the customer will be reviewed on a case by case basis.
- 6.2 The customer can appeal a decision to manage by contacting the Complaints Team. The Complaints Team will consider the appeal through the form of a formal complaint investigation in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure.
- 6.3 In the event that the Complaints Lead has issued to the warning or been involved in the management of the behaviour, the recourse will be to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.