



RCH Group Policy: Unacceptable Behaviours Policy

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Approval Body	Social Landlord Operations Committee
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This policy can be made available, on request, in different languages and in other formats such as large print, audio format and braille as required.

1. Scope

- 1.1 This is a Group policy and therefore applies to Staff, Board and Committee members of The RCH Group of companies. As at August 2024, The RCH Group consists of River Clyde Homes and its subsidiary, Home Fix Scotland Ltd.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 RCH Group is committed to providing a service which is accessible to everyone, where our customers are heard, understood and respected. However, when people are angry, demanding or persistent in their approach, conduct can escalate to a level that is unacceptable. We recognise that people may act out of character in times of distress however staff should not be subjected to unacceptable behaviour or conduct from anyone they deal with in the course of their work. Occasionally, the behaviour of customers can make it difficult for RCH Group staff to deal with an enquiry or concern.
- 2.2 This policy outlines our approach to handling customers when their actions or behaviour is considered unacceptable. The key objectives of this policy are as follows:
- To ensure RCH Group's definitions of unacceptable behaviour are clear and accessible to customers
 - To ensure that RCH Group's approach to unacceptable behaviour is proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the circumstances
 - To protect RCH Group staff, board members and contractors are protected from abusive or harmful behaviour from customers
 - To set out key actions that should be taken in the event of staff encountering unacceptable behaviour
- 2.3 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:
- RCH Group Customer Care Policy
 - RCH Health & Safety Policy 2024
 - RCH Group Complaints Policy
 - RCH Group Procedure: Alert Identification Procedure

Health and Safety Arrangements Procedure for Accident, Incident, Near Miss Reporting and Investigation

3. Definitions

'Unacceptable behaviour': Behaviour is not regarded as unacceptable just because a person is assertive or determined in their approach. Behaviour

becomes unacceptable when it becomes angry, demanding and/or persistent and when it places unreasonable demands on RCH Group staff and impacts the level of service provided to customers.

4. Policy Statement and Responsibilities

4.1 RCH Group understand that people may act out of character at times of trouble or distress. We recognise that under the Equality Act 2010 we have a commitment to identify where possible 'protected characteristics' that may impact on a customer's ability to communicate with us effectively. We also understand that customers may have genuine cause to be unhappy with our service if, for example, they feel that we have failed to meet their expectations or cause them unnecessary difficulties. However, where this behaviour escalates we have a duty to protect our staff.

4.2 This policy defines 3 types of unacceptable behaviour as follows.

4.2.1 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

We recognise the difference between anger and aggression. Aggression is not limited to acts that may result in physical harm but includes behaviour or language that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

This type of unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical acts of violence
- Threats
- Personal abuse
- Derogatory or discriminatory remarks
- Unsubstantiated allegations
- Rudeness or belittling remarks

Language, which is designed to insult or degrade, is racist, sexist, homophobic or makes serious allegations against staff such as criminal behaviour, corruption or perverse conduct without any evidence is deemed unacceptable behaviour. We may also decide that comments about 3rd parties are unacceptable because of the effect that listening to or reading them may have on staff.

We consider the use of social media and the internet to perpetuate or encourage aggression and/or abuse towards our staff to be unacceptable behaviour.

4.2.2 Unreasonable Demands

Individuals may make what we consider unreasonable demands on our staff or services. This can have a significant and disproportionate impact on our ability to deliver services.

This type of behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Repeat requests for responses within an unreasonable timescale
- Refusing to deal with designated staff and insisting on only speaking with specific staff members where this is not practical
- Repeatedly raising issues unrelated or irrelevant to the enquiry or complaint
- Repeatedly raising unsubstantiated complaints

This kind of unacceptable behaviour can detract from the service we provide to others, placing a significant burden on the organisation.

Although not necessarily aggressive in nature, this type of behaviour can be difficult and stressful to deal with when it is impossible to find a common ground or a realistic solution.

We consider these demands unacceptable or unreasonable if they impact on the work of staff including taking up excessive amount of time to the disadvantage of other service users.

4.2.3 Unreasonable Levels of Contact

We recognise that some customers will not, or cannot, accept that we are unable to meet their demands or may persist in disagreeing with a decision we have made. Persistent, repeat requests may be deemed unreasonable levels of contact.

This type of behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Repeated contacts in an unreasonable timescale, for example multiple calls in a day
- Persistent refusal to accept a decision or explanation
- Repeatedly raising complaints without presenting any new information

We will consider these actions to be unacceptable if they start to impact on the work of staff, including taking up an excessive amount of time to the disadvantage of other service users.

4.3 Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

Our response to incidents of unacceptable behaviour will vary on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature, extent and impact of the behaviour. We will try when appropriate to resolve issues in an informal way with customers however where this is not possible or appropriate we may take one of the following actions.

Will take into account any vulnerabilities or personal support requirements when deciding on appropriate actions and will liaise with professionals where required.

RCH Group have a zero tolerance policy towards any physical violence, verbal abuse, racial or other discriminatory remarks or harassment towards our staff. Staff who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from an individual have the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner that they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with this policy. Action may include terminating a telephone call, ending a face-to-face discussion or interview, withdrawing their service or generally removing themselves from the situation.

With the exception of immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact will only be taken after careful consideration of the situation.

All staff who experience this type of behaviour must follow the Incident and Accident Notification process as per the 'Health and Safety Arrangements Procedure for Accident, Incident, Near Miss Reporting and Investigation' document. The Police will also be contacted in all instances of use of or threats of physical violence or where we believe a crime has been committed.

There may be occasions where action may also be required to manage unreasonable demands or levels of contact. We will ensure where possible that we take the minimum action required to resolve the situation. In most cases unreasonable demands or contact will not result in removal of contact however alternative arrangements may be considered.

There are a range of actions that may be taken to manage unacceptable behaviour. Actions should be agreed by a Manager or above. Actions include, but are not limited to:

- Remove telephone contact and place customer on written correspondence only
- Ban the customer from office premises
- Place an alert code against the customer as per the Alert Identification Procedure such as Two Person Visit, No Female Visit, High Risk Individual
- Only take telephone calls from the customer at set times or on set days
- Put in place an arrangement for one agreed member of staff as the key contact
- Require the customer to make an appointment to see a named member of staff at the office

- Return any documents we consider irrelevant or excessive to the individual or, in extreme cases, advise that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate

4.4 Recording and reviewing

All instances of action taken or restricted contact should be logged on our Housing Management system. The length of time the arrangement or restriction remains in place should be decided by a Manager or above. This should also be recorded on the Housing Management system.

Any decision to restrict contact may be reconsidered if the customer demonstrates more acceptable behaviours.

Customers must be advised in writing of any decision to restrict contact or alternative contact arrangements put in place. The Alert Identification Procedure provides further guidance.

4.5 Right to Appeal

Any appeal against a decision to restrict contact will be considered by a Manager or above who has not been involved in the original decision. Appeals should be made in writing where possible.

Appeals should be considered within a 10 working day period and the decision provided in writing to the customer however discussions may also take place in advance using other communication methods if more appropriate to the customer.

At the end of the appeal process, if the customer remains unsatisfied about our decision, they have the right to contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Residents of Sheltered Housing also have the right to contact the Care Inspectorate.

4.6 Sharing of Information

RCH Group recognise that we have a duty of care to colleagues in other organisations where we have identified that a customer poses a risk. RCH Group may share this information with third parties where it is appropriate to do so. Information will only be shared where we believe there is a threat to safety and will consider this on a case-by-case basis. This decision will be taken by a Manager at RCH Group.

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) have been carried out and no issues have been identified.

The RCH Group will apply this policy fairly and consistently. In implementing this policy, we will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other grounds. Our commitment to equality and fairness will apply irrespective of factors such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or other personal attributes.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed in its entirety every 3 years, unless an earlier review is required due to changes in legal, regulatory or best practice requirements, or because monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in policy is required sooner.