

Acting Reasonably



Your guide to how we deal with
unacceptable behaviour

Why do we have this approach?

This booklet sets out Sandbourne Housing Association's approach when responding to people whose actions or behaviour are deemed to be unacceptable to Sandbourne and/or our contractors. Generally, most issues, enquiries and complaints are dealt with in a straightforward manner and we are able to provide a service or resolve an issue when it is reported to us.

In a minority of cases, however, people can behave in a way that impedes how we deliver our services or investigate a complaint and this can cause a significant resource issue for us.

Unreasonable behaviour may include being overly persistent by frequently requesting information, repeatedly contacting staff without giving them a chance to respond, or being abusive towards staff or contractors.

We have, therefore, developed this approach to make sure that we deal fairly, consistently and appropriately with people whose actions or behaviour are considered to be unacceptable.

What are the aims of this approach?

Sandbourne aim to:

- Make sure that everyone who approaches us is given the right to be heard, understood and respected and we provide a service that is accessible to everyone who is entitled to it. However, we retain the right, where we consider the actions of someone to be unacceptable, to restrict or change such access.
- Make sure that Sandbourne staff involved with delivering a service or investigating a complaint do not experience abusive, threatening or unacceptable behaviour or language from an applicant, tenant or leaseholder and/or member of their household or visitors.
- Clearly define what action we will take if we consider someone to be acting unreasonably.
- Make sure that we manage expectations, particularly where these are unrealistic, in a fair and consistent manner.
- Make sure that we focus on delivering excellent services or resolving genuine complaints within the resources we have available.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

We understand that when people are unhappy or dissatisfied they may act out of character and we do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

However, the actions of people who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on, or unacceptable behaviour towards, Sandbourne staff. It is these actions that we consider unacceptable and which we aim to manage under this approach.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language that may cause staff to feel threatened or abused. Examples include threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness. We expect our staff to be treated courteously and with respect. It is unacceptable when anger escalates into aggression.

Unreasonable demands

People occasionally make what we consider unreasonable demands on staff time through the amount of information they seek or provide, the nature, timing and scale of service they expect, or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised. Examples include demanding responses

within an unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, continual phone calls/emails/letters, pursuing the same issue or complaint through alternative avenues, eg other resources at Sandbourne, a Member of Parliament, the Ombudsman Service, etc, or repeatedly changing the substance of the issue or complaint.

We consider these demands as unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on our work, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff time or hindering service delivery.

Unreasonable persistence

People may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in response to their case, or contact Sandbourne persistently about the same issue.

Examples include refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint, refusal to accept explanations relating to what Sandbourne can or cannot do, and continuing to pursue a case without presenting any new information.

The initial approach to Sandbourne may be entirely reasonable; it is the persistent behaviour that is not (we consider the actions of persistent complainants and other people to be unacceptable when their complaint is not legitimate and takes the focus of staff time away from dealing with and responding to genuine issues).

How will Sandbourne manage unacceptable behaviour?

We will assess each incident on a case by case basis, taking account of the seriousness of the issue. We may consider these options:

Contact the person(s) in writing or by telephone

We will explain why their behaviour is causing concern and explain the actions we may take if their behaviour isn't addressed.

Restrict contact with Sandbourne

This could include personal contact with staff, via personal visits, telephone, letter, email or the emergency call system. The person(s) will be notified in writing of our decision. When a contact restriction is in place, we will provide a named member of staff and method of contact to use. The person(s) will still be able to contact us in the event of an emergency.

End telephone calls if the person is aggressive or abusive

Usually, the caller will be given a warning that unless they alter their behaviour the call will be terminated and if this does not happen the staff member taking the call has the right to make this decision.

Return or destroy excessive emails, letters or documents

We will return excessive amounts of correspondence, explaining why we've taken this action. In extreme circumstances, or where documents are offensive or defamatory, we will destroy them or they may be used in evidence for criminal or other investigations.

End all contact when threatened with physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment

Incidents may be reported to the police and we may add a warning to the record of that person(s). We will also assess if the behaviour is a breach of tenancy/lease and take appropriate action.

What happens if the person disagrees with the decision?

Decisions to restrict contact will only be taken after careful consideration. Wherever possible, the person(s) will be given the opportunity to modify their behaviour before the decision is taken. A person can appeal the decision to restrict contact; this can be made in writing to the Chief Executive, who will advise if the arrangements still apply or a different course of action is necessary.

Residents/leaseholders should be aware that persistent or unreasonable behaviour may place them in breach of their occupancy agreement and we may consider taking legal action. We may also consider applying for possession of the property or apply for an injunction to prevent future unreasonable behaviour. Breaches of these could lead to eviction or a custodial sentence.

Need more information?

You can:

Write to us at our registered office:

Beech House, 28-30 Wimborne Road, Poole, BH15 2BU

Email us on: info@sandbourne.org.uk

Website: www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk

Telephone us on: 01202 671222

Please note that telephone calls to the registered office number above may be recorded for information and training purposes.

In addition, we do have a range of other leaflets on specific topics, available on our website or upon request from our office.

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