



Challenging Behaviour Policy

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1 Overall purpose

This policy sets out the principles behind the challenging behaviour policy that Leeds Federated will follow in respect of dealing with challenging behaviour in accordance with current legislation and the regulatory framework for social housing.

The Policy supports Leeds Federated's vision of 'Building Futures Together' and is aligned with the following objectives of the Association:

- Objective 1: Sustain**
- Objective 2: Engage**

2 Context

This policy sets out the approach we will take when dealing with reports of challenging behaviour.

We recognise the impact challenging behaviour can have on individuals and will take reports seriously and act accordingly.

3 Background

Leeds Federated have in place a mission statement, strengths and values and a dignity at work policy that set out how staff will work with customers and colleagues. We also recognise that staff should not be subject to unacceptable behaviour from anyone they deal with whilst carrying out their duties for Leeds Federated.

It is recognised that staff work in a more agile environment and often work alone for long periods of time. This policy sets out where assistance can be accessed when challenging behaviour is experienced.

4 Introduction

Challenging behaviour can be defined as any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. This can include verbal abuse either face to face or over the telephone, threats and physical attacks as well as unreasonable persistence and vexatious complaints.

The purpose of the challenging behaviour policy is to:

- Give a commitment to staff and customers that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated and will be dealt with robustly.
- To make every effort to ensure that staff and contractors working on behalf of Leeds Federated are able to carry out their duties safely without fear or distress caused by challenging behaviour.
- To make clear to staff and customers what behaviours Leeds Federated considers to be unacceptable.
- To allow Leeds Federated to fulfil its obligations under relevant Health and Safety legislation.

5 Challenging Behaviour Policy

Customers and staff come into contact in a number of settings: Leeds Federated premises, over the telephone, in the customers home and out in public. We recognise that our customers are from varied backgrounds and with different personal circumstances. Some customers may be classed as vulnerable due to support needs, others may exhibit behaviours that we would class as challenging or unacceptable.

Front line staff are often presented with a range of difficult situations but are trained to deal with these effectively. On rare occasions customers exhibit behaviour that pose challenges in dealing with the individual effectively. This challenging behaviour can arise for a number of reasons such as social or health related needs, personal difficulties and dealing with emotive issues.

At times customers may be angry, determined or persistent in their dealings with us. This will not necessarily be classed as challenging. However, we will not tolerate any form of aggression, violence or abuse towards staff and consider this to be unacceptable at any time. Aggression can include behaviour or language that may cause staff to feel afraid, harassed, threatened or abused (including threats, verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness) as well as acts of physical violence. Within this we include all verbal and written communications from customers including those on social media.

In circumstances where customers are verbally abusive over the telephone, staff are empowered to terminate the call. Support can be sought and time out to recover provided. In the instance of repeat abusive calls, the customer will be given a verbal warning that current and future calls will also be terminated until the behaviour improves.

In line with our agile working practices, staff should be mindful of when they interact with our customers. Home visits in particular should not be arranged outside of our regular working hours wherever possible. If they are, staff should ensure their lone working device is fully charged and switched on ready for use and/or arrangements made to check in with a colleague to confirm they have left the address and are safe and well. Telephone calls to customers outside our main office hours need to be considered too as support may not be available from the wider teams. Most will go without an issue and be of benefit to all parties.

Instances of customers engaging in abusive, challenging or vexatious behaviour are expected to be minimal. Customers are expected to be responsible for visitors at their property or who may accompany them to appointments. We will respond to each incident on a case by case basis, dependant on the nature, extent and impact of the behaviour. We will also consider our relationship with the customer, for example a tenant may have breached their tenancy conditions. All instances of challenging behaviour will be logged under the accident/incident reporting system, whether or not injury occurs.

Vexatious complainants

We are committed to responding to our customers in a clear, honest and timely manner. Sometimes, a customer's approach in dealing with our organisation may place unreasonable demands on staff time and wellbeing. This customer might have unreasonable expectations as to what we can achieve as a social landlord or may feel unhappy with the outcome of their contact with us and seek to pursue complaints, reports or support where we deem there to be no further action possible by us.

We recognise the impact this behaviour has on staff. It becomes hard to manage other daily tasks when so much time is devoted to one customer. It is also de-motivating to keep engaging with a challenging customer when there is no resolution available.

Staff will be supported by their manager in dealing with customers who may fall into this category. An action plan will be made and clear, open communication will be sent to the customer to set out the situation and manage their expectations. This will also set out our expectations around future contact.

If necessary, a restricted contact agreement can be discussed with the Legal Officer.

Challenging Behaviour

The following guidelines apply:

- All staff are expected to behave in a professional manner so as not to create or aggravate an aggressive response. Staff should risk assess certain visits to avoid getting into a situation which could be avoided for example by making a telephone call instead of the home visit.
- Threats and/or acts of physical violence and damage to Leeds Federated property or equipment will be reported to the police. Leeds Federated will seek access to a customers' home to assess any suspected damage. All incidents will be formally recorded with Corporate Services through the accident/incident reporting system.
- Staff have the right to end contact with customers where they are subjected to challenging behaviour, e.g. by advising the customer they are terminating the phone call or by removing themselves from the interview.
- Contact arrangements will be reviewed after any act of challenging behaviour. This may result in customers being asked to use non-verbal methods when contacting the office ie email or SMS, for staff to carry out joint visits or customers being given a named contact to solely liaise with. Each decision will be made on a case by case basis and reviewed as necessary.
- A separate protocol is in place for the hubs, which are not intended to host customer meetings and guides are available on Sharepoint.

- We will consider a customer's support or health needs which may have impacted on their behaviour.
- Customers making abusive or unsubstantiated allegations towards staff will be advised that their complaint will not be actioned and the reasons behind this.
- All instances of challenging behaviour will be recorded on the housing management system under the customer's contact details. Non tenants will be added to the housing management system as a
- Following any incident, the risk assessment workflow should be completed on the Housing management system and a 'risk alert' added to the household and/or block, if approved by the relevant Manager. Information will also be communicated to relevant external agencies, within the confines of the General Data Protection legislation. The risk alert will remain in place for 6 months unless removed earlier and will be regularly reviewed should further incidents occur or after a period of time without incident.
- Where appropriate, staff will complete a risk assessment for customers where no incident has taken place but staff are aware of further information which makes the potential likely.
- The completed risk assessment will state the level of risk posed and steps required to mitigate future incidents.

After an incident, staff are required to report the incident, debrief with a colleague, contact their line manager or contact the Health Shield Support Line if needed. Mental Health first aiders are also on hand should they be needed. A link to current Mental Health First Aiders is attached here [Mental Health First Aiders](#)

The current telephony automatically puts the call handler in wrap up after a call so the staff member will be able to take a break or ask for assistance. If a manager is available and they can be alerted during the call, there is the ability to listen to the call live and / or intercept the call.

When out on-site staff should ensure their mobile phone and lone working device are charged and ready for use. This will help colleagues needing to contact the staff member in the event of an emergency.

Lone Working, Personal Safety and other relevant training will be offered from time to time to all front line staff and as part of this new starters are enrolled onto a session with our Health & Safety Manager.

6 Communication Plan

Leeds Federated will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and any changes through staff induction and team meetings. This will be reviewed through the staff supervision.
- Ensure that customers are advised of any relevant policy reviews through general communication methods

7 Implementation

The Customer Services Management Team are responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed. It will be implemented and is applicable across the whole organisation.

It is the responsibility of all Leeds Federated Housing Association staff to ensure that their work is carried out in accordance with this Policy. This will ensure that the Challenging Behaviour Policy is delivered consistently.

Refresher training will take place from time to time for all front line staff.

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if necessary to ensure it is meeting its overall purpose and supporting the objectives of the Corporate Plan.

8 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Leeds Federated Housing Association will monitor, evaluate and report on the activities undertaken to deliver this Policy, in particular, through:

- Health & Safety Committee
- Review of reportable incidents
- Staff 1:1 meetings
- Team Meetings

9 Equality Analysis

An Equality Analysis for the Challenging Behaviour Policy was completed in September 2023.