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Managing unacceptable behaviour (from residents / advocates / third parties)

1. Purpose

This policy is required, as on occasion, we need to respond to residents / applicants for housing / third parties who behave in an unacceptable or unreasonable way. In this policy, we set out Sutton Housing Society's (SHS) approach to managing unacceptable behaviour, whilst ensuring residents and housing applicants are treated fairly and with respect.

2. Understanding residents' / applicants' behaviour

We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is assertive or determined. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to an individual approaching SHS and people may act out of character.

However, the actions of some individuals who are angry or unreasonably persistent may result in unacceptable demands or behaviour towards employees. We will take appropriate action to manage such behaviour, which is grouped under three headings:

- Excessive contact and / or multiple unsubstantiated reports
- Abusive contact
- Other

3. Excessive contact and multiple unsubstantiated reports

This may be where an individual makes repeated phone calls to us; sends excessive emails, letters or social media messages and takes up a disproportionate amount of time and resources. Multiple unsubstantiated reports are persistent and regarding a matter or allegation(s) that lack substance.

When there are concerns regarding excessive, repetitive or continual behaviour, the employee and their line manager must consider all the circumstances of the situation and decide whether it is reasonable and proportionate to restrict contact.

4. Abusive contact

It is important we understand the difference between anger and aggression / abuse. For example, the resident / applicant may feel angry about the events that resulted in their contact with SHS; they have a right to share how this makes them feel. However, it is not acceptable for the resident / applicant to express / display aggression / abuse towards employees.

Aggression / abuse is not restricted to acts that may result in physical harm. It includes behaviour / language that may cause employees to feel frightened, threatened or abused. Examples of aggressive / abusive behaviour include but are not limited to:

- Threats
- Physical violence
- Personal abuse
- Derogatory or discriminatory remarks
- Repeated rudeness such as shouting and swearing
- Inflammatory statements
- Unsubstantiated allegations

Aggressive and / or abusive contact may take place in person, over the telephone, email or other forms of contact.

5. Other

Unreasonable behaviour or demands:

What amounts to an unreasonable demand is dependent on the circumstances and the seriousness of the issues raised by the individual. Examples of this behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Continuing to contact us about the same issue when due process has been applied e.g. the issue has been escalated through all stages of our complaints or appeals process
- Asking for responses, tasks, or repairs to be completed within an unreasonable timescale
- Insisting on communicating with a particular member of the team without good reason after having it explained that this may not be possible
- Repeatedly changing the substance of the request or raising unrelated concerns.

We also consider actions that have been taken with clear intent to cause harm to our employees as unreasonable behaviour.

6. Managing residents'/ applicants' unacceptable behaviour

How we manage unacceptable behaviour will depend on the nature and extent of it. In the first instance, we should always give the individual the opportunity to modify their behaviour. If the behaviour continues then we will consider whether to restrict their contact

with us. (We must always maintain at least one form of contact with residents and applicants and make provision for the reporting of emergencies.)

Before restricting contact, we will consider any vulnerabilities or additional needs that the individual has. This is to ensure we do not restrict the individual to a contact method they cannot comply with e.g. due to disability or language needs.

Where a resident / applicant's behaviour is considered unacceptable, we may restrict contact in the following ways:

- Only take calls at set times / days and / or allocate a specific employee to deal with their contact
- Request appointments are made to see a named employee only
- Request contacts are only in writing (this includes letters and emails)
- Advise the individual of our frequency of response (e.g. once a week) regardless of the number of their communications
- Advise the individual that we will only respond to new issues; for anything addressed previously, we will acknowledge the issue and refer them to our previous response
- Another way we consider reasonable in the circumstances.

Any restrictions put in place need to be kept under continued review as correspondence continues with the resident.

7. Right to appeal

As part of the notification procedure, all residents / applicants who have their access restricted should be given the opportunity to appeal the decision to impose the restriction in writing. The method for appeal should be set out in the letter advising them of their restricted contact and whether there will be a single point of contact in place.

8. Legal remedies

If a restrictive access process is put in place and the individual fails to adhere to the restrictions, the matter may be referred to our solicitor for further advice and / or to consider the legal options available to control continued unacceptable behaviour.

If the behaviour is abusive and / or a breach of tenancy, we can consider addressing the issue as a tenancy breach, where appropriate.

9. Monitoring and compliance

Compliance with this policy is monitored using quarterly reports of restricted access to track review dates, reasons and restrictions imposed.