UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

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UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

DOCUMENTATION MASTER SHEET

Amendments to this Document are Detailed Below.

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
01	13/10/20	New Policy	12/11/20	NT	Tenant Panel
02	22/12/23	Review	22/12/23	NT	SLT
03	05/11/24	Minor Addition	06/11/24	CM	NT
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OVERALL AIM/INTRODUCTION

GCH has a strong track record of listening and engaging with our customers, service users, and colleagues. We believe that they all have the right to be heard, understood, and respected. We are committed to dealing fairly, consistently, and appropriately with everyone who uses our services, including those whose actions we consider unacceptable.

We place great importance on treating our customers and our staff with respect and ensuring that in our verbal and written communications we are polite and considered. We expect the same approach from our customers and service users, and this policy sets out our approach to customers whose actions or behaviour we consider unacceptable.

We expect our staff to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards colleagues is unacceptable. It is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards GCH colleagues or company representatives.

This policy applies to anyone who has contact with our offices or colleagues / contractors in person, by phone or through any digital platform. It sets out our approach for managing unacceptable behaviour from customers, service users and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint or engaging in communications, actions, or behaviours which we consider unacceptable.

SCOPE OF POLICY

We aim to provide a service that is accessible to everyone. At times, where we consider actions to be unacceptable, we retain the right to restrict or change such access.

We understand that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress and may be angry or upset when they make a complaint and we will not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is direct or determined in the way they communicate with us or if they express frustration or emotion when making a complaint.

Actions of customers or other service users, who sexually harass, are aggressive, demanding, verbally abusive or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on, or unacceptable behaviour towards our staff. **It is these types of behaviours that we consider unacceptable and aim to manage under this policy.**

The definition of what GCH considers unacceptable are noted below, under service standards for guidance.

System Warning Alert: Should we be required to apply this policy to a specific customer or service user, an alert will be placed on our core housing system, in line with the Data protection act 2018. The alert will ensure staff are aware of any conditions or restrictions placed on a customer or service user and be able to apply them consistently.

GCH considers the following to be examples of unacceptable behaviour which are covered by this policy.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour
Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether oral or written) that may cause colleagues to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

Examples of behaviours grouped under this heading include:

- Threats,
- Physical violence,
- Personal verbal abuse (including that placed on social media), including derogatory remarks, rudeness, or insulting comments.

We also consider that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be deemed as abusive behaviour.

Sexual Harassment

Harassment may be sexual in nature. The law defines sexual harassment as:

- conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and
- less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

Examples of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can occur in many forms, and can take place either at work, outside work, in person, or online. While this is not an exhaustive list, examples include:

- physical conduct of a sexual nature, unwelcome physical contact or intimidation;
- persistent suggestions to meet up socially after a person has made clear that they do not welcome such suggestions;
- showing or sending offensive or pornographic material by any means (eg by text, video clip, email or by posting on the internet or social media);
- unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, suggestive remarks, or gender-related insults;
- offensive comments about appearance or dress, innuendo or lewd comments;
- leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures; and

gossip and speculation about someone's sexual orientation or transgender status, including spreading malicious rumours

Unreasonable demands
Customers and service users may make what we consider to be unreasonable demands on us through the amount of information they seek or provide, the nature and scale of service they expect, or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable demand will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised.

Examples of actions grouped under this heading include demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, unreasonably insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular colleague, continual phone calls, emails, or letters, repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising numerous unrelated concerns.

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 colleague time to the disadvantage of other customers and service users.

Unreasonable persistence
We recognise that some customers or service users will not or cannot accept that GCH is unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already. They may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their case and may contact us persistently about the same issue.

Examples of actions grouped under this heading include persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to their case or issue, persistent refusal to accept explanations and continuing to pursue a case without presenting any new information.

The way in which they approach us may be entirely reasonable, but in our view it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.

We consider the actions of persistent users to be unacceptable when they take up what we regard as being a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

Responses to unacceptable behaviour

If the customer or service user's actions are or continue to be unreasonable:

- We will restrict direct contact in person, by telephone, letter, on-line including our social media platforms or by any combination of these.
- We will inform them in writing that they must restrict contact and the terms of the restriction.

- Should we need to attend their home on matters relating to their tenancy or other legitimate matters, consideration should be taken to ensure two colleagues are in attendance.

Each case will be treated on an individual basis. If a customer or service user's action/s adversely affects our ability to do our work and provide a service to others, we may need to restrict their contact with our offices and colleagues in order to manage the unacceptable action.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY EXPECTATIONS

We reserve the right, should the situation require, to pursue either civil or legal action.

Legal action could be considered against any person who is verbally abusive, sexually harrasses, physically threatening, violent, causes an assault or is involved in vandalism.

Civil action could be considered against any user where an injunction may be required to restrict access to our premises and/or contact with colleagues.

SERVICE STANDARDS

Any restrictions placed on a customer or service user's contact due to unacceptable behaviour will be appropriate to their needs and will demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

GCH is committed to a fair and reasonable process of assessing someone who is unreasonable or abusive and ensuring that we communicate our expectations clearly. We will seek to resolve the situation informally at the earliest opportunity where this is possible, to avoid having to restrict contact.

A recommendation to consider whether a customer or service user's actions or behaviour is unacceptable under the terms of the policy will be made by the relevant manager and reviewed and agreed by the Director of Housing Operations.

CONSULTATION

Customers reviewed and approved the initial policy, and a further review has been undertaken by colleagues from across the business.

APPEALS

Appeals will be reviewed and determined by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

REVIEW

This policy will normally be reviewed triennially to ensure that it reminds fit for purpose, unless an earlier review is required due to regulatoy, statutory or other requirements.