Inclusion Barnet Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy

* + 1. About this policy
       1. The purpose of this statement is to outline Inclusion Barnet’s policy about unacceptable customer behaviour
    2. Introduction
       1. Inclusion Barnet believes that customers and members of the public have the right to express their views and ask questions about our services. It believes customers’ comments and suggestions are important in helping the organisation shape and improve the services it provides. We also recognise that in times of trouble or distress people may act out of character when they approach us.
       2. Inclusion Barnet does not view behaviour as unacceptable simply because someone is reasonably forceful or determined in their approach. Unfortunately, on occasion, some customers may choose to behave in a manner towards employees and/or place demands on our services that are unacceptable.
       3. This policy sets out Inclusion Barnet’s approach to the minority of our customers whose behaviour is assessed as being unacceptable. It also sets out the various actions we may take in order to manage any instances of such behaviour.
    3. Defining unacceptable behaviour
       1. **Abusive or offensive behaviour –** Employees have the right not to suffer abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour even when one is under stress. Some examples of unacceptable behaviour might include:
* Bullying or intimidating behaviour
* Abusive or offensive language; remarks of a sexual nature; racist language; homophobic or other discriminatory remarks
* Shouting
* Verbal or physical threats
* Attempting to assault someone
* Using, brandishing or throwing weapons or objects aiming to inflict harm
* Stalking or other forms of harassment
* Publishing unacceptable information on social media, websites, newspapers, etc.
* Offensive gestures
* Verbal or physical threats
* Punching, kicking, head butting, spitting
  + - 1. **Unacceptable demands on services -** Some customers may make unacceptable demands on services due to the amount of information they ask for, the nature and scale of service they expect and the number of approaches they make in relation to an issue(s). Inclusion Barnet recognises that in some cases this may be unintentional and what amounts to unacceptable demands will depend on the circumstances surrounding the particular issue(s) and the customer’s behaviour. Examples of unacceptable demands might include:
* Demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
* Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff
* Sending the same or similar request to several members of staff
* Refusing to end a telephone call – and/or insisting on speaking to someone who is either not available or not the appropriate person
* Requiring responses to correspondence where the content is malicious
  + - 1. Inclusion Barnet can view these and other types of contact to be unacceptable if it impacts significantly upon workloads and/or the capacity to deliver an effective service, for example, taking an excessive amount of employees’ time to the disadvantage of other customers.
      2. **Unacceptable persistent contact** – Inclusion Barnet recognises that some of our customers will not or can not accept that the organisation is unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that already provided. Customers may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their concerns or they may contact the employees persistently about the same issue(s). Examples of unacceptable persistent contact might include:
* Persistent refusal to accept a decision that has been made
* Persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what the organisation can or cannot do
* Persistent refusal to follow the proper procedures explained to them in order to pursue their issue/concern
* Making an excessive number of telephone calls or visits to our offices and/or sending an excessive number of emails, letters, text messages or WhatsApp messages.
  + - 1. It is not necessarily the manner in which such customers communicate with the organisation, but their persistence in doing so that goes beyond them being reasonably forceful or demanding.
    1. How we manage unacceptable behaviours – initial response
       1. **Telephone calls and video calls** - The use of abusive and offensive language towards employees will not be tolerated. Employees will end any telephone call if they feel the caller is being aggressive, intimidating, abusive or offensive. The person taking the call is empowered to make this decision. The caller will be advised that their behaviour and/or language are unacceptable and that the call will be politely ended if it continues. The call may also be ended if the customer refuses to conclude the conversation and persists in staying on the line. There may be rare occasions when the person involved is unable to give a warning that the call will be ended if the customer’s unacceptable behaviour/language continues, in which case they are empowered to end the call immediately.
       2. **“Face to face” contact** - employees are empowered to ask a customer to leave the premises if they feel the customer is being aggressive, abusive or offensive. The person dealing with the customer has the right to make this decision. In most cases the person involved will advise the customer that their behaviour is unacceptable and ask them to leave if it does not stop. In extreme cases, support from security on the premises or the Police will be sought to assist with ensuring the safety of our staff,
       3. **Correspondence** – Inclusion Barnet will not process any correspondence (including email, letters, text messages and WhatsApp messages) that is abusive. If communications of this nature are received, we will tell the customer that their communication is considered to be inappropriate and offensive. The customer will be asked to stop corresponding in this way and state that if they do not stop, Inclusion Barnet will not respond to any further communication from them.
       4. If an employee has to undertake any one of the above initial responses to an unacceptable behaviour, this constitutes one ‘unacceptable behaviour incident’.
    2. How we manage unacceptable behaviours – long term response
       1. In the event where an unacceptable behaviour incident has occurred three times, the Inclusion Barnet employee must meet with their manager to discuss if it is appropriate to adopt one or more of the following actions:
* Request the customer to only send communication to a dedicated email address and/or only use a dedicated telephone number
* Place time limits on telephone calls and/or personal contacts
* Require that any personal contact takes place in the presence of a witness (including telephone calls)
* Record all telephone calls and/or personal contacts
* Arrange for a named member of staff to deal with all calls or correspondence from the customer
* Limit communication to written only
* Inform the customer that their correspondence will only be read (to ensure no new issues have been raised), acknowledged and filed
* Inform the customer that all contact must be through a designated third party
  + - 1. If none of the above actions are appropriate and/or one or more of the actions have been exhausted, Inclusion Barnet reserves the right to withdraw services. In this instance, the Inclusion Barnet employee and their manager must:
* Inform the customer in writing that Inclusion Barnet will be withdrawing services due to a repeated breach of the unacceptable behaviour policy.
  + - 1. Where a customer’s behaviour is so extreme that it poses an immediate threat to the health, safety or wellbeing of staff, the customer may not receive prior warning that access to Inclusion Barnet services may be restricted. Inclusion Barnet will however provide written confirmation of its decision to the customer, where possible.
      2. In extreme cases, support from the Police will be sought to assist with ensuring the safety of our staff. If at any point a staff member feels unsafe with a customer, they are advised to call 999 immediately.
      3. Sometimes a customer’s behaviour can cause significant alarm, distress or concern that a criminal act may have taken, or be about to take place. When such situations arise, Inclusion Barnet will consider reporting the matter to the police or other relevant authorities. We will base our decision on an assessment of risk. The underlying principle will be the need to protect our staff and others from harm or the threat of harm.
      4. In any of the circumstances outlined above it is possible that all direct contact with the customer will be ended; they may be banned from entering Inclusion Barnet premises, and only written communications will be permitted. In some cases, it may be necessary to block or redirect the customers telephone number or email address or permanently ban the customer from entering Inclusion Barnet premises.
      5. If a decision is made to restrict a customer’s access, they will be advised in writing. The customer will also be advised as to when the decision to restrict their access will be reviewed. We will review decisions after 6 weeks if the customer still wants to access our services.
      6. If a customer is unhappy with a decision that has been made relating to Inclusion Barnet’s unacceptable behaviour policy, they should be signposted to the Inclusion Barnet external complaints policy.

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