

Policy for dealing with unacceptable customer behaviour

1 Overview

- 1.1 At Denbighshire County Council, we believe that our customers have a right to be heard, understood and respected.
- 1.2 We also believe that our staff and Councillors have the right to work in a safe environment, free from any abuse or harm caused by others.
- 1.3 We expect all customers to treat our staff and Councillors with courtesy and respect at all times.
- 1.4 In a small number of cases the actions of some customers become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff and Councillors and/or our processes.
- 1.5 We do not view an action as unacceptable, just because a person is forceful or determined. However, we do consider actions that result in unreasonable demands and/or abusive behaviour to be unacceptable.
- 1.6 There are a range of actions we consider to be unacceptable, which can be best grouped as follows:
 - Aggressive or abusive behaviour; and
 - Unreasonable demands and/or unreasonable levels of contact.

2. Aggressive or abusive behaviour

- 2.1 We understand that people can become angry when they feel that matters about which they feel strongly are not being dealt with as they wish. If that anger escalates into aggression or abuse towards our staff or Councillors, we consider that unacceptable.
- 2.2 Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff or Councillors to feel afraid, threatened or abused and may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness. We also consider inflammatory statements, remarks of a discriminatory nature and unsubstantiated allegations, to be abusive behaviour. Where a customer is aggressive or abusive, we may decide to:
 - Advise the customer that we consider their actions offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful and ask them to stop;
 - End telephone calls / appointments / meetings;

- Terminate all direct contact with the customer;
- Notify the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened; and
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances.

3. Unreasonable demands and / or unreasonable levels of contact

3.1 A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to impact excessively on the work of our staff and Councillors, or when dealing with the matter takes up an excessive amount of time and in so doing, disadvantages other customers.

3.2 Where a customer is unreasonably demanding, repeatedly contacts us in person, by phone, email etc., contacts various officers about the same issue, raises the same issue repeatedly, or sends us large numbers of documents about which the relevance is not clear, we may decide to:

- Limit contact to telephone calls from the person at set times on set days;
- Restrict contact to a nominated member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence;
- See the person by appointment only;
- Restrict contact to written correspondence only;
- Refuse to deal with further correspondence and return any documents;
- Advise the person that further irrelevant documentation will be destroyed; and
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances.

4. Taking action

4.1 Before we take any action, we will give the customer the opportunity to modify their behaviour. If the behaviour continues, we will take action as set out in this document.

4.2 Customers will be told in writing why a decision has been made, what the alternative arrangements will be and the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.