



## INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

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Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

# UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

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# UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Innisfree are committed to delivering excellent customer service. We train our staff to treat our customers with respect and to deal with enquires efficiently and effectively at the first point of contact, where possible.
- 1.2 In most cases, our staff enjoy an excellent working relationship with residents, contractors, and other customers, and can deal with enquiries without problems. Occasionally, however, there may be incidents where customers may for whatever reason behave unreasonably when contacting us. This can make it difficult for staff to provide the standard of service that is expected.
- 1.3 The Unacceptable Behaviour Policy extends beyond our staff to Board Members, contractors, consultants, and other agents working on behalf of Innisfree. Our view is very clear that no one should be subjected to unacceptable behaviour when representing or working with Innisfree.
- 1.4 This policy sets out the provisions that Innisfree have in place to deal with customers who display unacceptable behaviour in their contacts and requests for service from Innisfree.
- 1.5 This policy should be read alongside the Complaints Policy.

## 2. OUR APPROACH

- 2.1 We value our residents, contractors, and customers and will act promptly to address any concerns or complaints, investigating them thoroughly in a fair and respectful manner.
- 2.2 We recognise that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress, particularly if they feel that Innisfree has not provided an adequate service. However, we still expect our staff to be treated with courtesy and respect.
- 2.3 We are committed to maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and will seek to find the best ways of managing contact with individuals.

- 2.4 Where problems in the way that a person contacts us have been identified, we will seek to provide a flexible and tailored approach to ensure individual needs are met and services can continue to be delivered effectively, for the benefit of all customers.
- 2.5 Innisfree will ensure that any changes in the way that services are normally delivered are reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances involved and are subject to regular review.
- 2.6 Where alterations are made to the way that services are delivered as a result of this Policy, they will be reviewed at regular intervals depending on the circumstances of the individual concerned.

### 3. POLICY AIMS

#### 3.1 The aims of the Policy are to:

- Outline what types of behaviour are unacceptable.
- To provide a fair and reasonable process of behaviour management for the protection of staff, and the benefit of our residents, contractors, and customers.
- Take a holistic approach to preventing and ending unacceptable behaviour towards staff. We focus on tailoring our customer services to the individual's communication needs.
- Communicate clearly in an open and transparent way.
- Promote positive behaviour and encourage individuals to communicate with us appropriately.
- Provide support to staff to enable them to confidently communicate and to provide them with the skills needed to resolve conflict promptly.
- To outline how an individual can appeal a decision made to restrict their contact with Innisfree.

## 4. WHAT IS UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR?

- 4.1 Unacceptable behaviour includes any behaviour that prevents staff from delivering our services, and behaviour that would not be expected in the course of normal working relations.
- 4.2 Unacceptable behaviours can include the following types of behaviour in face to face, telephone or written contact:
- Aggressive or abusive behaviour
  - Making unreasonable demands
  - Unreasonable persistence
  - Unreasonable refusal to cooperate

## 5. AGGRESSIVE OR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

- 5.1 Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that can result in physical harm – it also includes behaviour and language that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened, or abused.
- 5.2 Examples of aggressive and abusive behaviour include:
- Threats
  - Physical violence
  - Personal verbal abuse
  - Bullying and intimidation
  - Derogatory remarks, discrimination, or disrespect
  - Inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations

## 6. UNREASONABLE DEMANDS

- 6.1 We consider demands as unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on the work that our staff do, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff time, to the disadvantage of other customers or functions.
- 6.2 What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the individual. In general, unreasonable demands relate to:
- The amount of information they seek
  - The number of approaches they make to us
  - The nature and scale of the service they expect
  - Demanding responses within an unreasonable time scale
  - Insisting on working only with a particular member of staff
  - Refusal to work with a member of staff
  - Refusal to specify the details of a complaint, despite offers of assistance
  - Denying or changing statements made at an earlier stage
  - Repeatedly changing the basis of a complaint or request as the matter proceeds

## 7. UNREASONABLE PERSISTENCE

- 7.1 We recognise that some customers will not or cannot accept that Innisfree are unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than which has been provided already.
- 7.2 Customers may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their complaint, concerns, or will contact the office persistently about the same issue.
- 7.3 Examples of unreasonably persistent behaviour include:
- Excessive phone calls, letters, or emails
  - Persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what we can or cannot do
  - Persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to the services we deliver, or complaints
  - Continuing to pursue a complaint or issue without presenting any new, relevant information

## 8. UNREASONABLE REFUSAL TO COOPERATE

- 8.1 When providing a service or handling a complaint, Innisfree needs to engage with the residents, contractors, or customers. If they do not cooperate, we will consider further action appropriate to the circumstances.
- 8.2 Refusing to allow access to contractors for essential maintenance works may result in Innisfree taking legal action to enforce access to the home.
- 8.3 Refusing access for non-essential maintenance works may result in Innisfree cancelling the repair request.
- 8.4 Refusing to engage with a staff member, contractor or appointed agent may result in cancelling of the service request or complaint.
- 8.5 Refusing to provide information requested by Innisfree staff may result in cancellation of the service if the information is necessary to progress.

## 9. MANAGING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

- 9.1 Innisfree will consider using the provisions set out in this Policy where staff believe the behaviour of an individual prevents them from delivering services and would not be expected in the course of normal working relations.
- 9.2 As an immediate response in face-to-face or telephone contacts, in particular where the person is abusive, offensive, or intimidating, Innisfree staff will inform them that their behaviour is unacceptable and outline the reasons why.
- 9.3 We will aim to ensure that the individual is warned immediately if their actions are seen as unacceptable and what will follow if this persists. We will attempt to defuse the situation and aim to bring the tone of the communication back to a more reasonable level.
- 9.4 If we are not able to defuse the situation, the staff member will advise that they will terminate the contact unless the unacceptable behaviour changes. This may involve walking away from a meeting, politely asking the person to leave, or ending a telephone call.

- 9.5 With the exception of incidents where immediate action is taken to stop or change the way the individual contacts us, decisions to restrict contact are only taken after careful consideration. Wherever possible we will give the person the opportunity to change their behaviour or actions before a decision is made.
- 9.6 In cases where the threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment is made to towards staff, the incidents will be reported to the Police. At this time all direct contact with the individual will end while the incident is investigated by Police.
- 9.7 In order to resolve the situation we may offer to meet the individual to discuss the unacceptable actions and agree a way forward. It may be appropriate in some cases to engage external experts like independent mediators to help resolve the situation.
- 9.8 To ensure that we provide a tailored service for individual needs, Innisfree will record all contact with residents on our housing management systems. We will record the details of the conversation, when it happened, what happened and why the contact was terminated.

## 10. RESTRICTING CONTACT

- 10.1 Where Innisfree staff believe the incident requires further action, they will discuss their concerns with their line manager. The line manager will then carry out enquiries, this may include:
- Reviewing the conversation details recorded on the housing management system
  - Reviewing phone records where appropriate
  - Reviewing email chains where appropriate
  - Speaking to other relevant members of staff about the contact
- 10.2 If the line manager determines that further action is required, they will arrange for an assessment of the individual's circumstances to take place by appropriate Innisfree staff members. As part of our commitment to embed the Equality Act 2010 into our practices, we will ensure that any issues of vulnerability are considered when assessing individual cases.
- 10.3 Where vulnerabilities are identified and they contribute to the unacceptable behaviours, staff will look to provide additional support to the resident, if none is already in place. This may include referring the resident to external support, medical or advocacy agencies.

- 10.4 Where no vulnerability is established or the provision of additional support does not make any positive change to the nature of the contact, we will undertake a case review to determine the best approach for managing future contact.
- 10.5 The case review may consider any, or a combination of, the following actions:
- Limits may be placed on the amount of time that Innisfree staff spend on telephone conversations or personal contact with the individual. This could include only accepting calls at specified times.
  - Placing restrictions on the means of communication – for example, only communicating via email, letter, or telephone calls.
  - Only communicating through an agreed third party or advocate agency
  - Requiring personal contacts to take place in the presence of a witness or at the Innisfree office
  - Refusing to re-investigate matters that have previously been resolved
- 10.6 Where we intend to place any restrictions on how the customer can communicate with us, we will inform the customer via their preferred communication method and by sending them a letter outlining the restrictions and the reasons behind them.

## 11. APPEALING A DECISION TO RESTRICT CONTACT

- 11.1 Innisfree will inform the individual whenever restrictions will be imposed on how they can make contact with us, how long the restrictions will be in place, and how they may appeal any decisions or intended actions.
- 11.2 Residents can appeal restrictions, decisions or intended actions on the grounds that their actions were wrongly identified as unacceptable, the action taken was disproportionate, or that the action taken will adversely impact on them because of personal circumstances.
- 11.3 Residents can appeal by outlining their concerns in writing and submitting them to the Operations Director for review.
- 11.4 Innisfree are not able to hear or investigate repeated appeals about the same issue and may alter how appeals are handled in line with any restrictions that have been imposed through the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

## 12. CONTINUED ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 12.1 Where restrictions on contact are in place, it is not intended to prevent residents from accessing our repairs services, periodic testing, property management (such as annual gas servicing), or from making genuine complaints about new issues.
- 12.2 When responding to requests for access to essential services, the conditions that have been imposed as part of the restricted contact will be taken into consideration; this may involve extending normal response targets; this will be explained to the resident in writing.

## 13. REVIEWING CONDITIONS

- 13.1 Whenever restrictions on the way that Innisfree manages contact are imposed under this Policy, the conditions will usually last for a period of three months before they are reviewed by the residents' Housing Officer and the Operations Director
- 13.2 At the review, we may:
- Remove the restrictions
  - Change the way that contacts are managed for another three months
  - Continue with the same restrictions for an additional three months, subject to review again
- 13.3 Where the individual has successfully appealed the decision to alter contact, or they provide evidence to Innisfree of a change of circumstance that impacts the way that their contact should be managed – the contact restrictions may be reviewed at sooner than three months.

## 14. ACTIONS SPECIFIC TO HOUSING APPLICANTS

- 14.1 If Innisfree encounter unacceptable behaviour from applicants for housing, we have the right to decline their application and feedback our concerns to the appropriate referral agency.

## 15. DATA SHARING

- 15.1 All information will be stored in our Housing Management systems. All case notes, case files, and personal information will be kept confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. We will adhere to the Data Protection Act and comply with General Data Protection Regulation for Sharing Personal Information to ensure that we maintain confidentiality of all parties.
- 15.2 We will share information with third parties where we have an information sharing protocol in place, if there are safeguarding concerns, or we have a duty to do so for the purpose of crime prevention under the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (and any other relevant legislation) justify it.

## 16. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

- 16.1 We are committed to embedding the Equality Act 2010 into our Policies and Procedures. As part of this commitment, staff should facilitate reasonable adjustments and adapt our standard policies and procedures wherever possible, in order to ensure every individual can access our services.
- 16.2 To make an adjustment means to change work practices to avoid or correct the disadvantage to a person with a disability. This may include:
- Allowing more time than we would usually for someone to provide information that we needed.
  - Providing specialist equipment or additional support such as a sign language interpreter.

## 17. CONSULTATION AND REVIEWING THIS POLICY

- 17.1 Innisfree will consult with residents on this policy via our website and newsletter.
- 17.2 All contact restrictions will be reviewed regularly by the Housing team and by the Operations Director to assess the effectiveness of the actions being taken in line with the Policy.





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