

SAXON WEALD

UNACCEPTABLE & UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

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1.0 Introduction and aim

- 1.1 We believe that our customers have a right to be heard, understood, and respected. We work hard to be open and accessible to everyone, but in a small number of cases a customer's actions may become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our colleagues or our processes, or their behaviour impacts on our ability to do our work and provide a service to others.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how Saxon Weald will protect colleagues, contractors and other service users from unacceptable, unreasonable, abusive or inappropriate behaviour, whilst continuing to provide fair and accessible services wherever possible.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all customers, applicants, leaseholders, contractors, visitors and any other individuals interacting with Saxon Weald colleagues or services through any communications channel, including telephone, email, written correspondence, social media and face-to-face contact.
- 1.4 This policy supports Saxon Weald's commitment to providing fair, respectful and accessible services while protecting colleagues from unacceptable behaviour.
- 1.5 This policy applies to all interactions with Saxon Weald colleagues, contractors and representatives, including those occurring in customers' homes, communal areas, schemes, offices, meetings, site visits, estate inspections and any other work-related setting. Saxon Weald will not tolerate abuse, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, stalking, threats or violence, regardless of where the interaction takes place.
- 1.6 We are committed to creating an environment in which colleagues can carry out their roles free from abuse, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, intimidation and violence. Incidents reported under this policy will be recorded, reviewed and monitored to help identify trends, manage risks and support the safety and wellbeing of colleagues.

1.7 In applying this policy, we will have regard to:

- The Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards, including the requirements to treat customers fairly, with respect and empathy, and to take account of diverse needs.
- The Housing Ombudsman's guidance on managing unacceptable behaviour.
- The Equality Act 2010 and our duties to consider reasonable adjustments for customers with disabilities or other support needs.

1.8 We also recognise that unacceptable behaviour towards colleagues may, in some circumstances, constitute a criminal offence. Where appropriate, Saxon Weald may work with the police and other agencies and may rely on relevant legislation, including laws relating to harassment, stalking, threatening or abusive communications, public order offences and anti-social behaviour, to protect colleagues, contractors and customers.

1.9 This policy is intended to provide a framework to support behaviour management rather than restrict access to services. Any action taken under this policy will be fair, proportionate, evidence-based and take account of individual circumstances, vulnerabilities and safeguarding considerations.

1.10 This policy focuses on the way a person behaves when interacting with Saxon Weald. It does not replace or override any other Saxon Weald policies or procedures, including those relating to complaints, anti-social behaviour, safeguarding or tenancy management. Any concerns raised by a customer will continue to be considered through the appropriate process regardless of whether this policy is applied.

2.0 Actions Saxon Weald considers as unacceptable

2.1 We recognise that people may act out of character when distressed, however, we consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on our service or unreasonable behaviour towards colleagues to be unacceptable. It is these actions and behaviours that we aim to manage under this policy.

2.2 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

2.2.1 We understand that on occasions our customers may be angry or frustrated about their enquiry but if that anger escalates into aggression towards colleagues we consider that unacceptable. Any violence, threats of violence or abuse towards colleagues will not be accepted.

2.2.2 Some examples of what we consider to be aggressive behaviour are:

- Threats of violence or harm.
- Physical violence.
- Personal abuse.
- Shouting.
- Derogatory or discriminatory remarks.

- Malicious or otherwise inflammatory statements, or unsubstantiated allegations e.g., about colleagues or other customers.
- Posting abusive, threatening, defamatory, discriminatory or harassing comments about Saxon Weald colleagues or customers on social media or online forums.
- Harassment, including sexual harassment, such as unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures, remarks about a person's appearance or requests of a sexual nature. We consider any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature to be unacceptable where it violates a person's dignity or makes them feel intimidated, humiliated, degraded, offended or unsafe.
- Filming or taking photos of our colleagues without their permission
- Stalking or persistent unwanted attention towards colleagues, contractors or representatives.

2.3 Unreasonable demands

2.3.1 What appears to be reasonable behaviour also becomes unreasonable if that behaviour negatively affects our ability to do our work. This might be because of the excessive amount of information requested or provided, the unreasonably high level of service expected, or the excessive number of approaches made to us.

2.3.2 Examples of this behaviour include:

- Repeatedly demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale.
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, when that is not possible.
- An excessively high volume of contact.
- Repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- Unreasonably complaining to us about matters that are not our responsibility.

2.3.3 This policy is intended to address the way in which a customer behaves rather than the reason for their contact. However, before applying this policy, we will consider whether service failures, delays, unresolved issues or poor communication may have contributed to the customer's behaviour. Customers will not be regarded as unreasonable simply because they make a complaint, challenge a decision, pursue a matter persistently or express dissatisfaction with our services.

3.0 **Reasonable adjustments**

3.1 We understand that some customers have health conditions or impairments which may make it difficult for them to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially when they are anxious or upset.

3.2 We also recognise that some health conditions or impairments can make it difficult for customers to assess the impact that their behaviour might have on other people. However, it is not reasonable for our colleagues to be subjected to aggressive, offensive or abusive actions, language or behaviour,

including harassment. We will use this policy if there are actions or behaviours that are having a negative effect on our colleagues or our work.

3.3 We will always consider making reasonable adjustments for someone with a health condition or impairment. For example, we could agree to:

- Using different methods of communication.
- Giving clear warnings when we feel that a customer's behaviour is unreasonable so that they have the opportunity to change it.
- Communicating at certain times of the day.
- Communicating through a third party, such as a family member, advocate, support worker, social worker, healthcare professional or other authorised representative.

3.4 Where appropriate, we may encourage customers to access additional support to help them communicate with us effectively. This may include advocacy services, support workers, healthcare professionals, social care services, mediation services or independent advice agencies such as Citizens Advice.

3.5 Before applying this policy or imposing any contact restrictions, we will consider whether the individual has any known vulnerabilities, support needs, safeguarding concerns, disabilities, mental health conditions, communication difficulties or other circumstances that may be contributing to their behaviour. We will consider whether any reasonable adjustments or additional support measures may be appropriate. However, these considerations will not prevent Saxon Weald from taking action where behaviour poses a risk to colleagues, customers or others.

4.0 Our response to unacceptable behaviour

4.1 How we respond to unreasonable behaviour will depend on the nature and extent of it. When we do respond, we will aim to bring the unreasonable behaviour to an end and protect our colleagues.

4.2 In cases involving violence, threats of violence, hate incidents, stalking, serious harassment, sexual harassment, criminal damage or credible threats towards colleagues, customers or contractors, Saxon Weald may take immediate action without issuing a prior warning. This action may include ending contact, withdrawing colleagues from a visit, restricting future contact, reporting matters to the police or other agencies, or taking legal action where appropriate including ending a tenancy.

4.3 Colleagues who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour, harassment or sexual harassment and need support can:

- Pass a call to a manager.
- Terminate the call.
- End a face-to-face discussion.
- Ask a customer to leave the office.
- Leave a customer's home, scheme, meeting or other work location if they feel uncomfortable, intimidated or unsafe.

- End or rearrange an appointment where behaviour prevents the interaction from being conducted safely and respectfully.

Colleagues should always prioritise their personal safety and remove themselves from any situation where they feel threatened, unsafe or at risk.

- 4.4 We recognise the distress that unreasonable behaviour could have on a colleague and we provide training to frontline colleagues on managing difficult conversations. We will make support available to colleagues who have been subject to unreasonable behaviour. This could be provided through their line manager, or another nominated member of colleagues, or through our Employee Assistance Programme.

Following incidents involving threats, violence, harassment, sexual harassment or other serious misconduct, managers should undertake a welfare check with the affected colleague and consider any additional support or follow-up actions that may be required.

Where appropriate, lessons learned from reported incidents will be used to inform colleague safety measures, training and preventative actions.

- 4.5 Full notes of any unacceptable behaviour will be made on our housing management system and by file note if necessary. The note should include details of the issue the customer contacted us about, what was said, what warnings they were given about their behaviour and how long the incident lasted. Incidents of violence and aggression towards colleagues should also be recorded on our health and safety system.

Incidents involving violence, threats, abuse, harassment, sexual harassment, discriminatory behaviour, stalking, intimidation or aggression towards colleagues, contractors or representatives acting on behalf of Saxon Weald must be recorded on the health and safety reporting system. Reports will be reviewed to identify trends, support investigations and inform any appropriate corrective or preventative action.

- 4.6 To address the unreasonable behaviour, we will send a warning letter to the customer. We may also take the following action: Restricting contact to a single point of contact.

- Restricting contact to a single communication channel.
- Restricting contact to written communication only.
- Limiting frequency of contact.
- Take legal action in line with our tenancy agreement.
- Report the unreasonable behaviour to the police.

- 4.7 Decisions to restrict contact will only be taken by the Housing Operations Manager or Customer Experience Manager (or by an Assistant Director in their absence). We will give the individual the opportunity to modify their behaviour and we will, in most circumstances, discuss potential actions we may take if they do not change behaviours.

- 4.8 Where repeated incidents involving the same individual are identified, Saxon Weald may implement additional control measures to protect colleagues and others. These may include risk flags on systems, joint visits, changes to service delivery arrangements, contact restrictions or other appropriate actions.

5.0 Customer appeals and review periods

- 5.1 If we put a contact restriction in place, a customer may appeal against our decision to do this. Appeals can be made to the Assistant Director – Housing or Customer Experience whose decision will be final. A decision on an appeal will be made within two weeks of it being made.
- 5.2 Any contact restriction put in place will be for a limited time and reviewed after six months.

6.0 Monitoring and reviewing

- 6.1 Incidents of unacceptable behaviour will be monitored as part of our occupational health and safety reporting.
- 6.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure that it reflects developments at Saxon Weald as well as changes in good practice, the law or any regulatory requirements, and that we achieve value for money for our customers.

7.0 Equality and diversity

- 7.1 Equality and diversity affects all aspects of our business and, as such, its principles are integral to everything we do. As a landlord and an employer, Saxon Weald aims to recognise and respond positively to people's differences, while providing equality of opportunity in relation to the services and careers we provide and support.
- 7.2 This means that no person or group of people, either working for Saxon Weald or seeking housing, services, employment or contracts from us, will be treated less favourably because of their or their partner's, family's, friend's or associated person's protected characteristics, which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.

Version	Amendment	By	Date
1.0	New policy	Laura Anderson	Sep 2020
2.0	Three-year review – Section 3.0 – updated wording to improve inclusivity Equality and diversity statement updated	Laura Anderson	Sep 2023
2.1	Interim update to reflect new sexual harassment legislation.	Sarah Thomas	Oct 2024

Version	Amendment	By	Date
3.0	Three-year review – amendments made to include scope, social media abuse, safeguarding/vulnerability considerations.	Laura Anderson Housing Operations Manager	Sep 2026