

## **Unreasonable Behaviour Policy**

## Introduction

1. The Pensions Advisory Service Ltd (TPAS) is committed to dealing with customers impartially, professionally and courteously. We aim to provide a high quality of service to everyone we deal with. Occasionally, there may be instances where we deal with people whose behaviour we consider is unreasonable. We have a duty to ensure that staff and volunteer advisers are properly protected, in accordance with our health and safety obligations and our general responsibility to safeguard their welfare. We do not expect our staff or volunteer advisers to tolerate this type of behaviour.
2. This policy sets out how we will work with all customers fairly and consistently for benefit of both customers and staff/voluntary advisers.

## What is unreasonable behaviour?

3. People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to an enquiry/complaint coming to TPAS. We do not view behaviour as unreasonable just because a customer is forceful or determined. However, we do consider behaviour that results in unreasonable demands on TPAS or unreasonable behaviour towards our staff or volunteer advisers to be unacceptable.
4. Most of the unreasonable behaviour is likely to happen during the course of telephone calls as TPAS does not offer a face to face service. However, it is possible that there may be rare occasions where callers visiting us in person might behave unreasonably or staff and volunteers participating in external events experience disgruntled and aggressive behaviour.
5. The following behaviour is deemed unacceptable when liaising with our staff or volunteer advisers:
  - Being unreasonably persistent – ringing us frequently to reiterate the same points; sending us voluminous repetitive or irrelevant emails or letters
  - Rudeness – swearing (generally or directed at a member of staff), persistent interruption, name calling or general discourtesy;
  - Anger – shouting; and
  - Aggressive behaviour – threats of physical harm to person(s) or property; behaviour which indicates that physical harm to person(s) or property is imminent or actual physical aggression.

## Avoiding unreasonable behaviour

6. We aim to avoid people feeling that they need or want to behave unreasonably towards us by communicating clearly, professionally and with respect. Therefore, we will manage customers' and respondents' expectations of the service we provide from the start of our dealing with them. For example, we explain the likely/realistic timescales of our contact wherever possible. Where we say that we will endeavour to do something by a particular date, we will make sure that we do so. And in the unlikely event that we cannot do what we have said, we will inform people about this and explain why.

Where staff feel that they need help in dealing with queries they cannot answer or unreasonable behaviour, they can ask for help from a member of the management team or more experienced colleagues or look to schedule a call back to the customer at a more convenient time when the situation and caller have had time to reflect.

---

## Dealing with unreasonable behaviour

7. Where people behave unreasonably, we will ask them to change their behaviour. For example, if someone shouts or swears at a member of staff or volunteer adviser during a telephone call, we will ask them not to do this. If they persist in doing this, we will warn them that we will terminate the call and if they persist, we will follow that through. The staff member who terminates the call will report this to their Head of Service at the time that this happens. Whether the call is terminated or not, a detailed written note of the telephone conversation should be made.
8. Where people are unreasonably persistent, for example by telephoning us several times a day for a number of days in succession, or by sending us voluminous or repetitive emails or letters, we will ask them to reduce their contact with the office to that which is absolutely essential. If our request is ignored, we will take steps to limit their contact with the office. Such steps might include requiring contact in a particular form – for example by letter only; requiring telephone contact on specified days or at specified times; or insisting that contact is only made with specific staff member(s). In exceptional circumstances, we may refuse to have further contact with individuals who are unreasonably persistent or abusive. Where we put limitations on contact with the office, this will be sanctioned by a Head of Service or the Chief Executive.
9. When a decision has been made by a Head of Service or the Chief Executive to reduce or curtail access to our service, the customer will be told in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place. This ensures that the customer has a record of the decision.
10. Where people make unreasonable demands, for example for a particular outcome to an enquiry or for us to deal with an enquiry/case in a particular way, we will explain clearly our reasoning as to why we cannot do this.
11. Where we receive threats against individual staff members/voluntary advisers or office property, they will be reported to a Head of Service immediately. The Head of Service will immediately consider what action should be taken. This may include informing the police or other emergency services.
12. In the event that a senior member of staff is not available when such an event arises, any member of staff/voluntary adviser will act in accordance with this policy and take steps that they see fit to ensure that they and/or other members of staff/voluntary advisers remain as safe as possible.
13. Wherever possible, we will give the customer the opportunity to change their behaviour or action before a decision is taken. In the event that action needs to be taken to deal with unreasonable behaviour, we will make a detailed note of events, including the unreasonable behaviour and any action taken to mitigate it. This will be recorded on the customer's record and we will do this as soon as possible after the event.

## Recording and reviewing decisions

14. We will record all incidents of unacceptable actions by customers. Where it is decided to restrict customer contact, an entry noting this will be made in the relevant file. A decision to restrict customer contact as described above may be reconsidered if the customer demonstrates a more acceptable approach. The relevant Head of Service will review the status of all customers with restricted contact arrangements on a regular basis.

15. In addition to this a central register will be maintained logging all incidents of unreasonable actions, which will be reviewed periodically.

\*\*\*\*\* End of Policy Document \*\*\*\*\*