

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

Code: CSHO 5.0

Version: 3.0

Created: March 2025

Review: March 2027

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1. Our policy statement

- 1.1. At Sage Homes, we are committed to providing excellent service and addressing our customers' concerns promptly and professionally. However, we recognise that in instances, individuals may engage in behaviour that is unreasonable, aggressive, or persistent in a way that disrupts our ability to provide fair service to all customers. This policy outlines our approach to managing such behaviour and handling complaints that are pursued in a manner that is excessive, repetitive, or intended to undermine the complaints process.
- 1.2. This policy sets out the approach Sage Homes will take in response to actions and/or behaviours towards staff or anyone acting on our behalf that are considered unacceptable. The policy compliance note applies to all forms of contact including telephone, written, verbal, social media, emails, and other digital channels.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all customers, or individuals who engage with Sage Homes and submit complaints or interact with our staff/ third parties acting on our behalf.

2. Actions Sage Homes considers to be unacceptable

- 2.1. This policy aligns with the Housing Ombudsman's Dispute Resolution Principles - Be fair, Put things right, and Learn from outcomes. Sage Homes will take a proportionate and measured approach to managing customer behaviour, ensuring that any restrictions are justified, necessary, and regularly reviewed. We commit to early intervention, alternative resolutions, and reasonable adjustments before imposing any restrictions.
- 2.2. At Sage Homes, we understand that people may act out of character when they are under stress or facing difficult circumstances. We recognise that behaviour is not considered unacceptable simply because someone is being assertive or determined. However, there are instances where the nature or frequency of a complainant's contact can hinder the organisation's ability to effectively address their own or others' complaints.
- 2.3. We approach each situation with empathy and understanding, keeping in mind the context that may have contributed to the customer's behaviour. However, we also need to maintain clear boundaries to ensure our service remains effective and fair for all customers. Examples of unacceptable behaviours are outlined below.

Aggressive and abusive behaviour

- 2.4. We recognise that customers may feel upset or frustrated about the issues they are experiencing, and we are here to listen and help. However, if that frustration escalates into aggressive or abusive behaviour towards Sage Homes staff, it will be considered unacceptable. We have a zero-tolerance policy for any form of violence or abuse towards our team.
- 2.5. Violence is not limited to physical aggression. It also includes any behaviour or language - whether spoken, written, or implied - that could make our staff feel offended, threatened, afraid, or abused.
- 2.6. We understand that people may be upset when they contact us, and we will assess each situation individually with empathy and understanding. However, while we respect a person's right to feel angry or frustrated, it is never acceptable to use shouting, swearing, or aggressive language towards our staff.

2.7. Unacceptable language is that which:

- is offensive, derogatory, or patronising.
- is verbal abuse, aggression, violence (this is not just limited to actual physical or verbal abuse but can include derogatory remarks, rudeness, inflammatory allegations, and threats of violence).
- is discriminatory in any way, including racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic comments.
- makes serious allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt, or perverse conduct without any evidence.
- Contacting staff using personal details or via social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or X.
- Publishing private, sensitive, or identifying information about staff members online or on public platforms.

2.8. We may decide that comments aimed not at us but at third parties are unacceptable because of the effect that listening to or reading them may have on our staff. Examples include rudeness, offensive comments, derogatory remarks, making inflammatory statements, or raising unsubstantiated allegations made towards these third parties.

2.9. Threats against staff will be taken very seriously and if staff feel scared or threatened at any point during a conversation with a customer, the interaction may be ended at any time.

2.10. Our priority is to provide a safe and respectful environment for both our customers and our team members. If aggressive or abusive behaviour continues, we may need to take appropriate action to protect our staff and ensure that communication remains constructive and respectful.

Harassment

2.11. Our staff have the right to work in an environment free from harassment, threats, or intimidation, including sexual harassment. We ask all customers to respect that our team members are carrying out their duties and communicating decisions on behalf of Sage Homes, which may not always reflect their personal views or preferences.

Harassment, including sexual harassment, towards our staff will not be tolerated. This includes any behaviour that creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for our team members.

2.12. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual harassment, such as unwelcome comments of a sexual nature, inappropriate jokes, suggestive gestures, unwanted physical contact, or sharing explicit content.
- Recording telephone conversations and sharing the information publicly on platforms such as YouTube, social media channels like X.
- Contacting staff through their personal details or social media profiles, including Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.
- Publishing personal, sensitive, or private information about our staff online or in public domains, such as noticeboards, newsletters, or community forums.

- 2.13. We are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for both our staff and customers. Any actions that compromise the privacy, safety, or wellbeing of our team members will be addressed promptly and appropriately.

Unacceptable or excessive demands

- 2.14. A demand becomes unacceptable when it significantly disrupts the work of our team or when complying with the demand would negatively impact our ability to serve other customers effectively.
- 2.15. Examples of unacceptable demands include:
- Requesting responses within timeframes that fall outside of our standard service level agreements.
 - Insisting on or refusing to engage with a specific staff member when this is not feasible.
 - Changing the nature of a complaint repeatedly or introducing unrelated issues that complicate the resolution process.
 - Making excessive or unnecessary contact while we are actively working on a complaint or investigation.
 - Refusing to accept a decision even after clear and detailed explanations have been provided.
 - Engaging in a pattern of submitting multiple complaints on the same issue without reasonable grounds or pursuing complaints without acceptance of reasonable findings or outcomes.
 - Requesting large volumes of information.
 - Continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence.
 - Any attempts to exert undue pressure, blackmail, or extortion to obtain a particular outcome, including threats to escalate complaints publicly or withhold key information unless demands are met.
- 2.16. These actions can place an unreasonable burden on our staff, potentially taking up a disproportionate amount of time and delaying the resolution of other customers' issues. Our aim is to provide a fair and efficient service to all customers, and we appreciate understanding and cooperation in achieving this.

Unacceptable and persistent levels of contact

- 2.17. Excessive or prolonged contact from an individual can disrupt our ability to effectively manage service requests/ complaints and provide a fair service to all customers. This can occur either within a short timeframe or throughout the duration of the service request/ complaint.
- 2.18. We consider contact to be excessive when the amount of time spent on telephone calls, responding to, or managing emails, and reviewing written correspondence begins to negatively impact our ability to handle that complaint or affects our capacity to address other customers' concerns.
- 2.19. Examples of excessive or persistent contact include:
- Frequent contact while we are actively working on an issue, preventing us from making progress.
 - Multiple phone calls in a short period, such as numerous calls in one day or within a single week.

- Lengthy conversations that repeatedly cover the same points, without providing new or relevant information.
- High volumes of emails or letters reiterating the same concerns or issues.
- Unnecessary copying of our team into emails to third parties, where the information is not relevant to the complaint being addressed.
- Unnecessary copying of senior members of staff, where their involvement is not required or relevant to the matter at hand.
- Overload of letters, calls, emails or contact via social media (this could include the frequency of contact as well as the volume of correspondence received as well as the frequency and length of telephone calls).

2.20. Our aim is to ensure that all correspondence/ complaints are handled fairly and efficiently. We ask for customers' cooperation in allowing us the time and space to thoroughly review and respond to their concerns.

Refusal to cooperate

2.21. When we are reviewing a service request/ complaint, it is essential that the individual raising the concern collaborates with us to ensure a fair and thorough investigation. This includes:

- Agreeing on the specific issues we will be investigating.
- Providing additional information, evidence, or comments when requested.
- Helping us by clearly summarising their concerns to ensure we fully understand the matter.

2.22. We understand that there may be genuine reasons why someone might find it challenging to comply with these requests, and we are committed to offering support and flexibility in such cases.

2.23. However, it becomes unacceptable when an individual consistently refuses to cooperate or fails to respond to reasonable and necessary requests from our staff. This lack of engagement can hinder our ability to investigate and resolve the complaint effectively. We ask for open communication and cooperation to allow us to address concerns as efficiently and thoroughly as possible.

Reasonable adjustments

2.24. We understand that some customers may find it challenging to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially when feeling anxious or upset. We also recognise that some customers may have a disability or other needs that require additional support under the Equality Act 2010. To ensure we can support their needs effectively, we ask that residents let us know what adjustments they require and how these adjustments will help them access our services more easily.

2.25. Before imposing any communication restrictions, Sage Homes will assess whether the resident has any vulnerabilities, disabilities, or personal circumstances that may be contributing to their behaviour. We will:

- Make reasonable adjustments, including changes to communication methods or providing additional support.
- Ensure all restrictions are proportionate and reviewed regularly to avoid unfair disadvantage to vulnerable residents. Where necessary, we will work collaboratively with external agencies (e.g. mental health support, social services) to ensure that the

needs of vulnerable residents are properly considered before any restrictions are implemented.

- 2.26. Under the Equality Act 2010, we are committed to ensuring that customers with a disability are not disadvantaged and that appropriate measures are in place to facilitate access to our services.
- 2.27. However, while we are committed to supporting customers, we do not expect our staff to tolerate aggressive, offensive, threatening, or abusive language or behaviour. Even where reasonable adjustments have been made, we reserve the right to apply this policy if actions or behaviours continue to negatively impact our staff or our ability to deliver services.

Telephone complaints

- 2.28. If a caller is rude, abusive, or aggressive, staff have the right to terminate the conversation. Whenever possible, the caller should be warned that the conversation will be ended if the behaviour continues.
- 2.29. Any incidents of this nature should be documented in the CRM system, unless the customer declines to have the call recorded at the start of the conversation. The staff member must also inform their line manager. The manager may then decide that, for a designated period, Sage Homes will restrict communication to written correspondence only and will not accept telephone calls from the complainant.
- 2.30. For further guidance, please refer to the [Housing Ombudsman's advice](#) on handling difficult situations.

Written complaints

- 2.31. If a written complaint is threatening or abusive, it should be referred to the relevant senior manager for review. The senior manager may inform the complainant that Sage Homes will not respond to complaints that contain threatening or abusive language and that no further action will be taken on the matter. All actions and decisions should be recorded in the CRM system for future reference.

Colleague safety

- 2.32. At Sage Homes, the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues are of utmost importance. We are committed to ensuring a safe working environment, free from threats, harassment, and any form of abuse. Our team members have the right to carry out their duties without fear of violence or aggression.

Actions we may take

- 2.33. When we encounter unacceptable behaviour or unreasonable demands, we may need to take more formal action to manage the situation effectively. The actions we may consider include:
- Issuing a warning to the customer about their behaviour and requesting that they modify their approach in future communications with us.
 - Assigning a dedicated point of contact for the customer to streamline communication.
 - Limiting communication methods, such as requiring all interactions to be in writing or through a designated representative.
 - Declining to investigate a complaint if it has been pursued in an unreasonable or unacceptable manner.

- Restricting or limiting contact or to a limited number of times per week or month to manage the situation more effectively.
- Only considering a certain number of issues in a specific period.
- Declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless any additional evidence or information is provided.
- In exceptional cases, notifying relevant public authorities if the behaviour poses a risk or involves unlawful actions.
- In extreme cases such as physical violence or harassment towards an employee, actions could include involving the police, taking legal action, and ending direct contact with the customer.
- Tenancy action.
- Block from social media.
- Injunction.

2.34. If a decision is made to take formal action, such as refusing to investigate a complaint, we will inform the customer in writing, providing a clear explanation of the decision. A record of the decision will be kept on our system for future reference.

2.35. Before implementing any restrictions, we will write to the customer explaining:

- The reason for the proposed restriction.
- The evidence supporting our decision.
- The specific limits being imposed and for how long.
- Their right to appeal the decision.

Managing unacceptable behaviour

2.36. It is important to remind complainants that there is a Complaints Policy and it will be properly followed.

2.37. If the complainant continues to express dissatisfaction after exhausting the complaints handling process, they should then be reminded of the right to take their complaint to the Ombudsman or other relevant external body. They can also seek independent legal advice if they believe they can get a remedy through the courts.

Appeals and review process for contact restrictions

2.38. At Sage Homes, we believe in maintaining transparent and fair procedures when imposing contact restrictions. We understand that circumstances can change, and as such, any customer subject to a restriction has the right to appeal the decision.

How to appeal a decision

2.39. Customers have the right to appeal any restriction. The process is as follows:

- Appeals must be made within 30 calendar days of receiving the restriction notice.
- A senior manager not involved in the original decision will review the appeal.
- We will respond within 15 working days, explaining whether the restriction will be upheld, modified, or lifted.

Review Period for Contact Restrictions

2.40. All restrictions will be subject to a scheduled review every 3 to 6 months, at which point

we will consider:

- Any changes in the customer's behaviour.
- Whether the restriction is still necessary or can be lifted.
- Any additional support needs that have arisen.
- The effectiveness of the restriction in managing communication.
- Feedback from staff and any further incidents during the restriction period.

2.41. Customers will be informed of the review outcome in writing, including reasons if the restriction is extended.

Right to be heard, understood, and respected

2.42. At Sage Homes, we are committed to treating all customers fairly, honestly, consistently, and appropriately, including those whose actions may be considered unacceptable. Every individual has the right to be heard, understood, and respected, and we expect the same in return from those engaging with our staff.

2.43. We also recognise that counter-allegations against employees must be taken seriously and handled fairly and impartially. When a resident makes a complaint about a staff member, we will assess the nature of the allegation and take appropriate action:

- Allegations related to anti-social behaviour (ASB): If a complaint involves harassment, intimidation, or nuisance behaviour by an employee that affects residents or the wider community, it may be handled under our ASB policy to ensure a fair and thorough investigation.
- Allegations of misconduct, unprofessional behaviour, or breaches of company policy: These will typically be managed through HR procedures and the employee's line manager.
- If an allegation raises safeguarding risks, it will be referred to the appropriate safeguarding procedures to ensure resident welfare.

2.44. Each case will be assessed individually to determine the most appropriate course of action, ensuring that both employees and residents are treated fairly and that complaints are handled transparently and efficiently. Sage Homes remains committed to protecting employees from harassment or false accusations while ensuring that residents' concerns are properly addressed.

Communication and language considerations

2.45. Sage Homes is committed to using respectful and non-inflammatory language in all communications. Therefore:

- We will not use the term "vexatious" in any correspondence or policies, as it may provoke unnecessary conflict.
- Our communication will focus on the behaviour rather than the individual, maintaining a respectful and professional tone.

Representation and multi-Agency approach

- 2.46. Sage Homes recognises that some customers may require support when raising concerns or navigating the complaints process. Where appropriate, customers can appoint a representative to act on their behalf, such as a family member, friend, support worker, or advocate. This ensures that customers who may find it difficult to express themselves or manage communications independently can still engage fully with our services.
- 2.47. In cases where a customer is receiving support from other agencies, such as social services, mental health teams, or housing support providers, we will consider whether a multi-agency approach is necessary. This may involve working collaboratively with relevant organisations to ensure a coordinated response to the customer's needs. In such instances, we will always seek customer consent before sharing information, in line with data protection regulations.

3. Equality and diversity

- 3.1. Sage is committed to making sure all services are accessible to all our residents. Our staff will be trained to communicate appropriately with you, and they have the relevant information and access to translation services to make sure they fully understand your needs.

This policy will be applied in a way which makes sure we treat all customers with fairness and respect. We recognise our duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and any other protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010.

- 3.2. On request we will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures in various languages and formats including braille and large print. Our website also has accessibility tools allowing you to personalise each web page to make it easier to read and to download content as audio files.

4. Delivery of the policy

- 4.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies which can be found on our website [here](#):
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
 - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
 - Hate Crime Policy
 - Complaints Policy
 - Antisocial Behaviour Policy

5. Review of the policy

5.1. We will review this policy at least every two years to make sure it remains relevant and accurate unless:

- Legislation/regulation or industry changes require otherwise, ensuring that it continues to meet our aims and any good practice developments
- We identify any problems or failures in this policy as a result of customer and stakeholder feedback, complaints, or findings from any independent organisations.

Version	Checked by	Amendments	Approved at/by	Date of Approval	Published by	Date of Next Review
1.0	Head of Resident Services and	First version in new format	Strategic Health and Safety	Feb 2022	SHEQ Director	Feb 2024
	SHEQ Director		Committee (SHSC)			
2.0	Head of Resident Services	Strategic review and update to corporate template	Leadership Team	Nov 2022	Office Management	Nov 2024
3.0	Deputy Head of Customer Care	Strategic Review	Leadership Team	March 2025	Office Management	March 2027