



Knowsley Council

Policy for Managing Unreasonable Actions by Complainants

Reviewed August 2025

Some customers act in ways we consider unreasonable when trying to resolve their complaints. We have a specific policy to address these situations and outline our approach.

We take all complaints seriously and aim to resolve them fairly. Usually, we can work with complainants to reach a solution that works for both sides. However, if communication becomes difficult, we may need to take appropriate steps.

This policy explains how we will handle cases where a person's actions are unacceptable, especially if they involve mistreatment of staff or misuse of the complaint process. It applies when a customer has filed a formal complaint. If customer interactions fall outside the complaints policy, other policies may be relevant.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman defines unreasonable actions as:

Unreasonable actions are those which, because of the nature or frequency of contact with an organisation, hinder the organisation's delivery of services or consideration of complaints.

If we find that your actions regarding your complaint are unreasonable, we will explain our reasoning and the issues it is creating. Additionally, we will outline our proposed approach for future communication with you.

Examples of unreasonable behaviour include but not exhaustive:

- aggressive or abusive language
- making excessive demands for information, documents or requesting actions outside the complaint procedure
- sending large volumes of correspondence or an excessive number of contacts
- refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refusing to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaint's procedure
- insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeking to have them replaced
- changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- denying or changing statements he or she made at an earlier stage

- introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a later stage
- raising numerous, detailed but unimportant questions; insisting they are all answered
- covertly recording meetings and conversations
- submitting falsified documents from themselves or others
- adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with a variety of organisations or departments within the council
- making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous council staff, or detailed letters every few days, and expecting immediate responses
- submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations that the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints
- refusing to accept the decision; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.

How we will communicate with you

We will reach out to you in writing to explain our reasons for considering your behaviour to be unreasonable.

In cases where you have an ongoing complaint:

- we will provide updates regarding the status of your complaint and the expected timeline for our response
- we will clarify the reasonable ways for you to make contact while your complaint is under investigation, along with the rationale for this
- we may impose limits on the frequency of contact that is considered acceptable concerning your complaint

In instances where your complaint has fully utilized the Council's complaints policy:

- we will confirm that your complaint has gone through the Council's complaints process and will guide you towards the appropriate escalation channels

Should unreasonable behaviour continue after these measures have been implemented, it may result in restrictions on your communication with the Council.

The specifics of the restriction will be communicated in writing, including a designated review period for the restriction.

If you contest the restrictions, we will take your concerns into account and assess whether the restriction has been applied appropriately. Should you disagree with the

outcome of this review, you have the option to request that the Local Government Ombudsman and Social Care Ombudsman evaluate the reasonableness of our decision.

You can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman at:

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Phone: [0300 061 0614](tel:03000610614)

Website: www.lgo.org.uk