

This policy outlines Amplius' approach to addressing instances where customer conduct is not appropriate and to provide colleagues with the necessary support and guidance for challenging such actions and behaviours.

Customer Conduct Policy

Document management

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Part 2

Overview

Scope

At Amplius we always aim to deliver great customer service and expect colleagues to be polite, respectful and helpful when dealing with customers. Equally, we expect a similar courtesy in return. On the very rare occasion that a customer behaves in a way that is unacceptable, this policy sets out how that will be appropriately addressed.

The purpose of this policy is to outline Amplius approach to addressing instances where customer conduct is not appropriate and to provide colleagues with the necessary support and guidance for challenging such actions and behaviours.

The policy expects all customers to be dealt with fairly, consistently, and appropriately including those who actions are considered inappropriate.

This policy will reflect the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and show regard for a customers' individual circumstances and our colleagues, before deciding how best to manage the situation.

Outlined within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code is a requirement for all landlords to have a policy that focuses on managing unacceptable customer conduct as part of the complaints handling process. Whilst developing this policy we have used their recommendations as a guide to ensure good practice.

The term Amplius incorporates all member companies and subsidiaries.

The policy applies to:

- All colleagues that work for Amplius.
- All contractors that are undertaking work for Amplius.
- All customers Amplius customers across all tenancy tenures, including Leaseholders and Shared Owners.

All colleagues are responsible for the delivery of this policy.

The policy does not form part of any colleague's contract of employment and the policy may be amended at any time.

Part 3

Policy details

Definition of unacceptable customer conduct and actions

Customers understandably get frustrated at times and therefore may act out of character. We need to identify the difference between anger expressed in relation to a particular issue and anger directed towards colleagues, which makes it very difficult for us to deal with their complaint.

Unacceptable customer conduct is defined as:

- aggressive and abusive behaviour
- unreasonable demands
- unreasonable persistence
- Excessive contact via letter, calls, email, social media and any other access channel into the business.

Aggressive and abusive conduct

Any conduct that causes colleagues to feel unsafe, afraid, or abused. This may be verbal or written and includes but not limited to the following examples:

- threats
- abuse, swearing.
- repeated personal remarks.
- threats of violence
- excessive shouting and rudeness
- inappropriate and offensive remarks and language
- 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.

Unreasonable demands

Individuals may make unreasonable demands, such as the amount of information they request, the nature or scale of the service they expect or the number of approaches they make. A customer's demands become unreasonable when they take up a disproportionate amount of time, which then has an adverse impact on the service delivered to other customers.

Examples may include (this is not a complete list):

- unreasonable demands (e.g.: requesting large volumes of information, asking for responses within a short space of time, refusing to speak to an individual or insisting on speaking with another)
- unreasonable persistence (refusing to accept the answer that has been provided, continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence, continuously adding to or changing the subject matter of the complaint)

- 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)
- 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)
- continuing to pursue a complaint that has exhausted the complaints process.
- refuse to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of help.
- constantly demanding the attention of senior managers and refusing to deal with less senior colleagues.
- sending an excessive amount of emails and expecting immediate responses
- leaving an excessive amount of posts on social media sites
- making repeated telephone calls and not allowing colleagues time to respond
- pursuing complaints on the same issue with a number of organisations
- constantly referring to historic issues that have been dealt with
- refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaint's procedure.
- secretly recording meetings and telephone conversations

In practice a customer may display a number of these behaviours, and it may be the combination that defines the conduct as unacceptable.

It's important that we manage customers' expectations from the outset. We expect colleagues to be clear about what Amplius can and cannot do and never over promise or avoid challenging conversations.

Threats to report complaints to the media will be raised with the Communications Team for their attention.

Sanctions

We will always aim to use informal arrangements in the first instance, so a customer has the opportunity to change their behaviour. It is always worth considering whether discussing the matter with the customer is appropriate. This may enable the situation to be de-escalated with no further action required.

If further remedy is required, in most cases the next step is for a warning letter to be sent to the customer outlining that their behaviour is not acceptable and warning them against any continued unacceptable conduct.

If the conduct continues to be unacceptable, we will put sanctions in place.

The decision to impose a sanction on a customer whose conduct has been defined as unreasonable and/or unacceptable is the responsibility of the Director or Head of Service of that service area.

Robust and good documentary evidence will be required in order to initiate this policy.

All written communication will be recorded and where appropriate an alert will be added against the customer's account.

We reserve the right to restrict contact whether this is by telephone, letter, personal visits or email. We will always maintain at least one form of contact.

Written communication will be issued to advise the customer that a sanction has been applied. The communication will:

- outline why we have taken the decision.
- the action we are taking.
- the duration
- further actions will be outlined if this type of behaviour continues, and
- their right to appeal. The Director of Customer Operations will hear any appeals.

The sanction(s) to be applied will depend on the level and severity of unacceptable conduct.

We will tailor our approach to deal with individual circumstances and may include one or a combination of the following measures (this list is not exhaustive):

- Initial written warning communication to the customer to advise that the particular behaviour has been considered unacceptable.
- To inform the customer that all action has been taken regarding a particular issue and the matter is considered closed. Any further communication on the same subject will only be read, acknowledged and recorded on the customer's account.
- We may decide to appoint one point of contact for all communication.
- We may decide to limit the type of contact with us to written communication only. This will not restrict your ability to call us to report responsive repairs or any other urgent need.
- Limiting contact to certain times, days or to a limited number of times per week or month
- Banning access to our offices except by appointment
- Declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless any additional evidence or information is provided.
- We may seek advice from our solicitors and consider legal action depending on the nature of the severity of any behaviour or incident, as well as where there is a reoccurrence or failure to comply with the restrictions.
- Threats or the use of physical violence, harassment or verbal abuse towards colleagues is likely to result in the end of all contact. Incidents will be reported to the police with legal action taken.

Sanctions to restrict customer contact will be reviewed every three months.

If conduct has not improved, an explanation will be provided as to what the restriction will remain in force for a further period pending the next review date.

All sanctions and review agreements will be issued by written communication.

Any action taken under this policy will be added to the customer's account with a full description as to why and actions taken.

We will work collectively with our contractors to gather evidence if there are allegations of unacceptable conduct towards their team members.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Amplius policies are developed in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion approach. We are committed to ensuring that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated unfairly as a direct or indirect result of this policy.

Additional needs (addressing vulnerabilities)

Amplus recognises that, for various reasons, some of our customers and service users may be vulnerable. Policies therefore will take account of the recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman and Regulatory recommendations on vulnerabilities. Amplus will take a proactive approach when making a decision relating to a customer or service user and where practicable, tailor and adapt our services to suit the needs of customers and support vulnerable people.

Part 4

Compliance and administration

Legal and regulatory compliance

This policy fully complies with Amplius' legal and regulatory obligations.

- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code – April 2024.

This list is not exhaustive, and policy authors will undertake thorough research and/or seek professional advice to ensure that Amplius meets its obligations and complies with the current and relevant legislation and regulations.

Evaluation, review and performance monitoring

This policy will be reviewed on a Triennial basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. A policy review may also be required earlier, in response to internal or external changes for example changes in legislation. Prompt and effective action will be taken where improvements are identified.

Reporting on the number of customers that have sanctions applied to their tenancy will be reported to Customer Experience Committee on an ad-hoc basis upon request.

Any sanctions may form part of an information request by the Housing Ombudsman Service as part of a formal complaint, of which information will be made available to them on a case-by-case basis.

Related policies

- Complaints Policy
- Estate Management Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy

Part 5

Appendices

A. Associated documents – internal procedural documents, colleague use only

- There are no associated documents as part of this policy.

B. Customer Conduct Policy

What we will do	What this means to you
We will investigate each case, looking at the facts, what has happened and how often.	You may be contacted as part of our investigation. Your account of what has happened will be listened to.
We will ask you if there are any issues that are contributing to your behaviour, e.g. poor mental health or learning difficulties.	If you agree, we can make a referral for support, e.g. a Customer Partner/Housing Officer, mediation service or another appropriate agency.
We will tell you if we find that your behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonable.	You will need to stop behaving in this way. You will be able to appeal if you disagree with this decision.
We may tell you how we now expect you to behave.	We may tell you: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How you can contact us, e.g. by email only• How often, e.g. once weekly• When e.g. a particular day of the week.
We will tell you if one point of contact is put in place for you.	You will be given the name and contact details of this colleague.
We may place a marker on your tenancy records about unacceptable behaviour. We will review this marker in timescale that will be clearly outlined to you.	You will be able to appeal if you disagree with this decision.
We will report incidents to the police where we believe a criminal offence has been committed, e.g. violence or threats of violence or harassment.	The police may investigate and take action.
We may take legal action against a customer or a tenancy and this may be 'without notice', e.g. due to violence or threats of violence.	You should seek independent legal advice, e.g. from Citizens Advice or a solicitor.

Part 6

Changelog

Amended date	Summary of changes	Version №