

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

Version Control:

Version	Date	Author	Verifier	Comments
1.0	11 June 2024		Resimanagement Customer Committee	Added to the revised Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and to reflect new Housing Ombudsman Code.



1 Introduction

- 1.1 Heylo Housing Group Limited (HHGL) is the parent company of the Group, which includes Heylo Housing Registered Provider Limited (HHRP) and a number of property-owning investment vehicles (Pods) (collectively referred to in this policy as 'Heylo'). The Heylo Group's purpose is to provide home ownership solutions across England. HHGL currently provides two different Shared Ownership products – HomeReach and YourHome.
- 1.2 All customer facing services to Heylo customers are provided by employees of ResiManagement, a separate, but commonly controlled company. In this policy where we refer to 'staff', this includes the staff of ResiManagement.
- 1.3 The Regulator of Social Housing's 'Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard' requires that we "must treat tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect" and we "must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly." This Policy accords with guidance from the Housing Ombudsman's "Principles of Good Complaint Handling" and "Complaint Handling Code" and the 2010 Equality Act.
- 1.4 All local authorities and registered social housing providers are required to be members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. The role of the Ombudsman is to investigate complaints and resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities).

HHRP, as a Registered Provider is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, but it is important to note that homes held within the group outside of HHRP are not covered by the Ombudsman Scheme. All other parts of this policy do apply.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 This policy sets out how Heylo Housing Group Limited and Heylo Housing Registered Provider (Heylo) manages unacceptable or vexatious customer contact in a formal and respectful manner.
- 2.2 We understand that sometimes people get angry, and staff are trained to deal with challenging situations. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a customer contacting us and people may act out of character. However, the actions of some customers who are angry and/ or persistent may result in unreasonable demands upon, or behaviour towards, staff.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all Heylo customers and defines:
 - The unacceptable customer behaviour that we will not tolerate towards staff and/ or third parties acting on our behalf.
 - The actions that may be taken if staff/third parties are faced with unacceptable behaviour
- 2.4 This should be read alongside the Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy.

3 Aims

- 3.1 It's important to us to know what our customers think. If we've got something wrong, we want to know, and do what we can to put it right. When things have gone well, we're equally keen to

hear positive feedback. In both cases, we will share this with colleagues and managers, learn and improve our services.

3.2 Sometimes, customers may make what we feel to be unreasonable demands, for example if they are having a substantial impact on our services due to the scale of information requested, the nature of the request, or multiple approaches. This may also include aggressive or threatening behaviour.

3.3 This Policy sets out our approach to the few customers whose actions or behaviour we consider unacceptable. We adopt a similar approach to that of the Housing Ombudsman Service.

3.4 The aims of this Policy are to:

- Make clear to customers in all their dealings with us, what we can and cannot do in relation to their case. In doing so, we aim to be open and avoid raising expectations we can't meet;
- Deal fairly, honestly and consistently with all customers, including those whose actions we consider unacceptable. We believe that everyone who approaches us has the right to be heard, understood and respected. We also consider that our staff have the same rights;
- Provide a service that's accessible to everyone who's entitled to it. We do however reserve the right, where we consider customers' actions to be unacceptable, to restrict or change access to our services; and
- Ensure that staff and other customers don't suffer detriment as a result of customers who act in an unacceptable way.

4 Definitions

4.1 Unacceptable Behaviour

People may act out of character in times of stress, and we recognise that there may have been distressing circumstances leading up to a customer interaction. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined but where customers behave in an unacceptable way towards our staff, or a way which places unreasonable demands on them. We have grouped this kind of behaviour into three broad categories:

4.2 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Refers to any behaviour (verbal or physical) which makes staff feel afraid, threatened or abused. Examples could include: physical violence, verbal abuse, swearing, derogatory remarks, rudeness, inflammatory statements and malicious allegations.

We expect our staff to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards staff is unacceptable. We understand the difference between anger and aggression. Anger may accompany a complaint but when it escalates into aggression towards our staff it is unacceptable.

4.3 Unreasonable demands

Refers to customers making demands on us through the amount of information they request or provide, the level of service they expect, or the number of approaches they make. We consider these demands unreasonable if they start to impact disproportionately on our work or take up an excessive amount of time to the detriment of other customers. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the individual circumstances of the case.

Examples could include (but are not limited to): demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, disproportionate phone calls, emails, or letters, repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.

4.4 Unreasonable persistence

Refers to customers persistently disagreeing with an action or decision taken in relation to their case or contact us persistently about the same issue. Again, we consider this persistence unreasonable when it starts to impact disproportionately on our work or take up an excessive amount of time to the detriment of other customers.

Examples could include (but are not limited to): persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint or an explanation about what we can and cannot do and continuing to pursue a complaint without providing any new information.

5 **Managing unacceptable behaviour**

5.1 There are very few customers whose behaviour, demands or persistence Heylo consider to be unacceptable. How we aim to manage these situations depends on their nature and extent. If they adversely affect our ability to operate and provide a service to others, we may need to restrict a person's contact with us in order to manage the situation appropriately. We'll aim to do this in a way which still allows a case to progress.

5.2 We may restrict contact in person, by telephone, email, letter or any combination of these. We will always seek to maintain at least one form of contact. In extreme situations, we'll inform the customer in writing that their name is on a 'no personal contact' list. This means that they must restrict contact with us to written communication or communication through a third party e.g. a family member, friend or support worker.

5.3 The use or threat of physical violence, verbal abuse, or harassment towards our staff is likely to result in the termination of all direct contact with the person on a temporary/permanent basis. Verbal Incidents may be reported to the police in appropriate circumstances. Customers will always be reported where physical violence is used or threatened or discriminatory remarks made.

5.4 Heylo will not accept communication (written or verbal) which is abusive to staff or which contains malicious allegations. In these circumstances we will tell the person concerned why we are taking this approach and, in the case of unacceptable language, ask them to stop the communication (e.g. a telephone call) in question. We may require future contact to be through a third party.

5.5 Where someone repeatedly telephones or visits our premises without an appointment (including where personal contact has been restricted) or they send irrelevant / duplicative documents or raise the same issue repeatedly without cause we may decide to:

- Restrict contact to telephone calls e.g. at set times or limit contact to a particular member of staff;
- Restrict contact to pre-arranged appointments or written communication only;
- Return irrelevant documents to the sender or, in exceptional cases, advise that documentation will be destroyed;
- Restrict issues being raised to those which are clearly relevant; and

- Take other action that we consider appropriate. We will, however, always say what action we are taking and why.

5.6 Persistent customer requests or demands may be considered unreasonable where all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted (e.g. our Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy) and the customer continues to dispute the outcome. We will advise the customer that we are unable to enter into any further communication about the matter. If the customer's requests or demands persist, their communication will be read and filed, but responded to only where it provides new, relevant information about the case. This decision will be made by the Director of Property Management.

6 Restricting customer contact

6.1 Staff who experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from a customer (or another person on their behalf) have authority to deal with that behaviour as it immediately arises in a way they consider appropriate having regard to this Policy. For example, this may involve us terminating a telephone call due to the customer's behaviour.

6.2 Aside from these immediate situations, decisions to restrict contact with us are always taken after careful consideration by a senior manager. Wherever possible, we will give the customer an opportunity to modify their behaviour or actions before contact is restricted. Customers will be informed in writing that a decision has been made to restrict their contact and why, the nature of the new contact arrangements and the timescales that will apply. They will also be informed of their right to appeal our decision.

6.3 A customer can appeal against a decision to restrict their contact with us. A manager more senior to the original decision-maker (which will likely be a member of the Executive Committee) who has not previously been involved in the case will consider the appeal. They will consider the case carefully and, having done so, advise the customer in writing either that the restricted contact arrangements still apply or that a different course of action will be adopted.

6.4 We record all incidents of unacceptable actions or behaviour by customers and these will be stored within our electronic systems.

6.5 Customer contact may be restored if the customer demonstrates acceptable behaviour over a sufficient period of time.

7 Diversity and inclusion

7.1 Heylo will act fairly and consistently in the application of this Policy and will not discriminate against any person on the grounds of their age, race, ethnicity/nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, pregnancy status or disability. Accordingly, any restrictions imposed on a customer's contact following the process set out above should recognise and be appropriate to their individual circumstances.

8 Reporting and Monitoring

8.1 The default position is that a marker will remain on the customers record for one year from the date it is applied. In exceptional cases a longer period may be agreed by the relevant manager e.g where the customer poses a more serious risk to our staff or contractors or another person. This decision will be taken by the Director of Property Management.

- 8.2 The Senior Management Team within the Property Management function will review on a monthly basis any cases that are coming up for review and inform the relevant manager of any decisions so the customer can be informed.
- 8.3 A log of restricted customer contact resulting from this policy will be maintained and regularly reported (anonymised where appropriate) to the Customer Committee and Executive Committee of ResiManagement, HHRP Customer Committee, the HHRP Board Member responsible for complaints and both HHRP and HHGL Boards.

9 Confidentiality

- 9.1 Heylo and its agents will observe confidentiality in complaints procedures and will only share details of complaints/complainants with external stakeholders with the authority of the complainant. Where applicable Heylo will share complaint details as directed and expected by the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH).

10 Information Storing

- 10.1 All data is stored securely and in line with our Data Protection and Security Policies.
- 10.2 We are committed to treating all information securely, with respect and in line with data protection law (GDPR).
- 10.3 We may share personal information with other organisations. We will only share information where we have sharing protocols in place and/or confidentiality agreements signed. We will also give information to other organisations where we are required by law to do so.

11 Review

- 11.1 We will review this Policy every two years or more frequently if needed to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.

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