



Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy and Procedure For Sight and Sound Technology Limited

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Introduction

At Sight and Sound Technology Limited, we are committed to creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all our employees and customers. We believe that every individual deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

We understand that, in times of trouble or distress, people may act out of character, and, in a very small number of cases, may behave in an unacceptable way despite our best efforts to help.

This makes it difficult for us to deal with queries or complaints effectively. We also have a duty to protect the welfare and safety of our staff. They should be able to come to work without fear of violence, abuse, harassment, or discrimination.

Purpose of this policy

This policy means we can manage unacceptable customer behaviour consistently and fairly. It sets out clearly what we consider to be unacceptable and the steps we may take to deal with such behaviour. It applies to everyone who accesses our services to help us protect staff from abuse and harm.

Principles

You can expect that our employees will always:

- provide a fair, open, proportionate, and accessible service
- listen and understand
- treat everyone who contacts us with respect, empathy, and dignity

We expect people accessing our services to:

- be courteous
- engage with us in a way that does not hamper our ability to carry out our work effectively and efficiently for the benefit of all

Safeguarding

We may contact the police if others are threatened with harm.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour means acting in a way that is unreasonable, regardless of the level of someone's stress, frustration or anger. It may involve acts, words or physical gestures that could cause another person distress or discomfort.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

This is behaviour or language (written or spoken) that could cause our staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused. This includes threatening emails, telephone calls, meetings, and comments on social media or elsewhere.

For example:

- insulting or degrading language, including inappropriate banter, innuendo or malicious allegations
- any form of physical violence or threats of physical violence
- derogatory racist, sexist, ageist, or homophobic remarks
- comments relating to disability, perceived gender, religion, belief, or any other personal characteristic

Unreasonable demands and vexatious complaints

Customers might make requests that we cannot reasonably accommodate. This may include but is not limited to:

- the amount of information they seek
- the nature and scale of service they expect
- the volume of correspondence they generate
- a remedy or outcome that cannot be achieved

We accept that someone who is persistent is not necessarily guilty of unacceptable behaviour. What is seen as an unreasonable demand will depend on the circumstances of each case. We will always consider each complaint on its own merits.

However, the behaviour of someone who persistently contacts us about the same issue, when that issue has been dealt with in line with the company's usual processes, can, in some circumstances, amount to unreasonable demand. Such behaviour takes up a disproportionate amount of our time and resources and can affect our ability to provide a service to others.

Examples of behaviour which we consider as unreasonable demands and vexatious complaints include but are not limited to:

- refusing to follow our complaints procedure
- persistently pursuing a complaint where the company complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted.
- contacting us repeatedly and frequently without giving us enough time to respond to previous correspondence
- adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints about the same issue with different members of staff
- threatening or using actual physical violence towards staff or their associates
- being personally abusive or verbally aggressive towards staff dealing with their issue or their colleagues
- recording meetings or conversations (whether face-to-face or on the telephone) without the prior knowledge or consent of other people involved

How we will respond to incidents of unacceptable behaviour

We do not expect our employees to tolerate unacceptable behaviour when communicating with our customers. When this happens, our employees have the right to:

- place callers on hold
- end the call
- not reply to an abusive email or letter - we will only review these communications to ensure no new issues have been raised

Before taking such action, we will always warn customers that they are behaving in an unacceptable way to give them the chance to change their behaviour. However, a warning will not be given in extreme cases to protect our staff, for example, when a physical threat is made.

Where these circumstances arise, we will take the following steps:

- we'll ask customers to modify their behaviour and explain why
- if the behaviour continues to be unacceptable, our employees will remove themselves from the situation. If the communication is by telephone, the caller will be told that the call will be ended
- the employee will inform their manager who will keep a record of the incident. In all cases a manager will investigate the situation and decide what action to take. This could include limiting a customer's contact with us
- we'll refer the matter to the police where a criminal offence has been threatened or committed

Communication restrictions

If customers continue to behave unacceptably, a senior manager can put in place a temporary or permanent communication restriction on a customer. If we decide to do this, we will tell the customer that we are doing, so setting out:

- why we consider their behaviour unacceptable
- what action we are taking and if there is a time limit on the restrictions

If we decide to limit communication, we will make a note of the limitation in our records.

Communication might be:

- limited to being conducted in writing
- limited to a specific individual
- limited to a specific email address or telephone number
- placed on file without a further response if the issued raised in the correspondence has previously been considered
- limited in other ways which we consider appropriate in the circumstances, in line with this policy

In addition, we reserve the right to:

- restrict contact to a nominated employee who will deal with all future calls or correspondence
- restrict the issues on which we will correspond
- block emails or telephone numbers
- refuse to consider a complaint or any further contact in exceptional circumstances
- take any other action which we consider necessary or appropriate to make this policy effective.

Where circumstances are serious enough to warrant further restrictions, we may take legal action to prevent further contact/poor behaviour.

In making any decision to take legal action in such cases, we may consider:

- how legal action may affect our staff
- how legal action may affect the individual (including their personal circumstances and any reasonable adjustments)
- the extent to which we can engage or assist
- the extent to which the process or subject matter has been exhausted

Review

We will regularly review any decision to restrict communications and when appropriate we may lift some or all restrictions.

How we will take account of our duties under the Equality Act 2010

We make sure that we meet the requirements of the [Equality Act 2010](#). This includes making sure we consider adjustments for people with protected characteristics.

Some people may have difficulty expressing themselves or communicating clearly and/or appropriately. We will always consider the needs and circumstances that we have been made or are aware of, before deciding how best to manage the situation. This will include making reasonable adjustments. However, this does not mean we will tolerate abusive language, shouting, or other unacceptable behaviour or actions.

If an individual with a protected characteristic becomes the subject of a restriction under this policy, we will consider whether the restriction may affect them more than someone without that characteristic. If this is the case, we may make different arrangements so they can still access the service.