

# Grosvenor Hart Homes: Acceptable Behaviour Guidance



GROSVENOR

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## Acceptable Behaviour Guidance

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance sets out the approach of Grosvenor Hart Homes (GHH) where tenants or other customers exhibit actions or behaviour we consider to be unacceptable. The guidance applies to all communication with our staff, whether in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour, complaints and disputes, or otherwise, as well as behaviour towards GHH representatives.

### 2. Guidance Aims

- 2.1 To deal fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately with all tenants and other customers, including those whose actions we consider unacceptable. GHH believes that everyone who contacts us has the right to be heard, understood and respected. We also believe that the GHH team have the same rights.
- 2.2 To provide services that are accessible to everyone who is entitled to it. However, GHH retains the right, where we consider user actions to be unacceptable, to restrict or change such access.
- 2.3 To ensure that other tenants, customers and staff do not suffer any disadvantage from tenants and other customers who act in an unacceptable manner.
- 2.4 To deal with all issues raised under this policy and all others in a trauma informed manner.

### 3. Defining Unacceptable Behaviour

- 3.1 People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to their interaction with GHH. GHH will take a trauma informed approach to dealing with all our customers including when addressing issues of unacceptable behaviour. We also uphold the principle that whilst behaviour may be understandable in the context of previous trauma, it can still be unacceptable. The GHH team will always endeavour to adjust their response to unacceptable behaviour in a way that takes account of pre-existing trauma.
- 3.2 GHH does not view behaviour as unacceptable because someone is forceful or determined. However, the actions of those who are angry, demanding, or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on, or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. It is these actions and behaviours that we consider unacceptable and aim to manage under this guidance.
- 3.3 We have grouped these actions under three broad headings:
- 3.2.1. Aggressive or abusive behaviour
- Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened, or abused.
  - Examples of behaviour grouped under this heading include threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, and rudeness. We also consider that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour, including vexatious allegations made against GHH team.

- We expect our team to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards GHH team or employees from partner organisations is unacceptable.

### 3.2.2. Unreasonable demands

- GHH seeks to be flexible and support our customers as best we can. However, tenants and other customers may make what we consider unreasonable demands through the amount of information they seek or provide, the nature and scale of service they expect, or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised.
- Examples include demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, continual phone calls, emails, texts, or letters, repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint/issue or raising unrelated concerns.
- We consider these demands as unacceptable and unreasonable if they start to impact substantially on our work, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff time to the disadvantage of other tenants, service users or functions.

### 3.2.3. Unreasonable persistence

- GHH recognises that some tenants will not or cannot accept that the organisation is unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already. Complainants may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their case or contact GHH persistently about the same issue.
- Examples include persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint, persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what the organisation can or cannot do and continuing to pursue a complaint or dispute without presenting any new information. The way in which these tenants or customers approach the organisation may be entirely reasonable, but it is their persistent behaviour in continuing to do so that is not.
- We consider the actions of persistent complainants to be unacceptable when they take up what the GHH considers to be a disproportionate amount of time and resources and have already been dealt with via the GHH Complaints procedure, which aligns with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Service. This is set out in the GHH Complaints Policy.

## 4. Managing Unacceptable Actions

4.1 We will always seek to understand the views of our customers in line with our trauma-informed approach and give customers the chance to modify their behaviour. There may however be occasions where GHH will consider the actions and behaviours of tenants and other customers and/or their associates to be unacceptable as set out in section 3 above. GHH will take a proportionate approach depending on the nature and extent of the actions. If actions or behaviours adversely affect our ability to do our work and provide services, we may need to restrict a tenant's contact with our office in order to manage the unacceptable action. We aim to do this in a way, wherever possible, which will still allow the complaint or dispute to be dealt with according to our procedures. We may restrict contact in person, by telephone, text, letter or electronically or by any combination of these.

4.2 The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse, or harassment towards the organisation or its employees is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the perpetrator. Incidents may be reported to the Police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

4.3 We do not deal with correspondence or other forms of communication which is abusive to a GHH team member or contains allegations that lack evidence. When this happens, we will tell the sender that we

consider the communication offensive, unnecessary, and unhelpful. Whenever possible we will ask them to stop using such language and state that we will not respond to them if they do not stop.

4.4 GHH will end telephone calls if the caller is considered aggressive, abusive or offensive. The staff member taking the call has the right to make this decision, tell the caller that the behaviour is unacceptable, and end the call if the behaviour does not stop.

4.5 When a tenant or customer repeatedly contacts or visits GHH offices, to raise the same issues that have already considered, we may decide to:

- only receive/address communication from the person at set times on set days, or designate a named member of staff to act as sole point of contact for person
- inform the person that communication relating issues which have already been responded to will receive no further response
- require the person to make an appointment before visiting the office
- return the documents to the person or, in extreme cases, advise them that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed
- take other action that we consider appropriate. We will, however, always say what action we are taking and why

4.6 If all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted and the tenant or customer continues to dispute the decision we have made or how the matter has been handled, we will tell the tenant that no future communications concerning the matter will be accepted. If the user insists on contacting us about the same issue, their communication will be read and filed, but only acknowledged or responded to if it provides significant new information relating to the matter. However, if the matter is being dealt with under GHH's complaints policy and procedure, we will comply with the separate stages of the procedure and where necessary comply with any requests from the Housing Ombudsman service.

4.7 In extreme cases, where all other avenues have been explored and there is a persistence of unacceptable behaviour, especially where there is serious violence or the threat of violence, GHH may view the behaviour as a breach of tenancy and eviction proceedings may be explored.

## 5. Restricting Contact With Tenants and Customers

5.1 GHH team members who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from a tenant or customer when a complaint or dispute is still under consideration have the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with this guidance.

5.2 With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact with the organisation are only taken after careful consideration of the situation by a member of Executive Leadership Team. Wherever possible, we will give a tenant the opportunity to modify their behaviour or action before this decision is taken. Tenants will be told in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.

5.3 GHH records all incidents of unacceptable actions by tenants or customers. Where it is decided to restrict user contact, an entry noting this is made in the relevant file and on the appropriate computer record. An alert may also be put on the tenant's record in line with the GHH Alerts Policy.

5.4 A decision to restrict user contact may be reconsidered if the tenant demonstrates more acceptable behaviour. The Housing Director will review the status of all tenants with restricted contact arrangements as necessary.

### Review schedule

This policy will be reviewed every three years or more frequently as a result of feedback obtained, internal/external audits and change in legislation or regulatory requirements. This process ensures the policy's continuing suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness.

The Housing Director has responsibility for this policy, and ultimate responsibility for performance and compliance sits with the board.

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