



Policy on ‘unacceptable complainant behaviour’

This policy applies either when there has been a single, serious incident of unacceptable behaviour, or when there has been an accumulation of incidents of unacceptable behaviour over time.

Cambridge City Council values the feedback on our services that we receive through the complaints process and we are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who make them. However, we also have a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of staff and sometimes in pursuit of their complaint complainant behaviour may cross the boundaries of what we consider it reasonable for staff to have to deal with. For example, we do not expect staff to tolerate behaviour by complainants that is abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening, and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour.

If we consider a complainant’s behaviour unacceptable we will tell them why and ask them to change it. If the unacceptable behaviour continues or constitutes a serious risk (such as threatening a member of staff with violence), we will take action to restrict the complainant’s contact with our offices and our staff. Unacceptable behaviour may include one or two isolated incidents or may be the accumulation of incidents or behaviour over a period of time (such as regular use of offensive language over the telephone).

The decision to restrict access to our offices and our staff will be taken by the Council's Monitoring Officer, Simon Pugh, in consultation with the relevant Director or Head of Service. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. They may include the following:

- Limiting the complainant to one means of contacting the Council (e.g. by letter)
- Requiring the complainant to communicate with only one named member of staff (this may include re-routing emails to a named officer)
- Require complainants to attend the office by appointment with the named officer only

- Requiring that any personal contact with a named officer take place in the presence of a witness
- Restricting the number and duration of calls (e.g. one call per week of 20 minutes duration)
- Taking legal action to prevent further contact by the complainant in the form of an anti-social behaviour order or injunction

Where, despite the restrictions, a complainant continues to behave in a way that is unacceptable, we may bring to an end all contact with the complainant and discontinue any investigation into their complaint.

Where behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate health and welfare of the council's staff, we will consider other options, for example, requiring the complainant to leave the premises immediately, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases we may not give the complainant prior warning of our action. In these circumstances the name of the complainant will be added to the Council's Employee Protection Register.

July 2010