



Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Managing Customer contact

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1.0 Introduction

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is committed to providing a consistent, fair and accessible service to anyone that comes into contact with the organisation. This policy determines how the OPCC manages customer contact with the relatively few customers whose actions or behaviour are considered unacceptable. We are accountable for the proper use of public money and must ensure that money is spent wisely and that the work of the office is not disrupted to the detriment of other service.

2.0 Aim of policy

To deal honestly, fairly, consistently and appropriately with all customers.

To reserve the right to manage access to its services in order to provide a fair and accessible service to all customers by not tolerating what it considers to be unacceptable behaviour towards OPCC staff and where it considers customers' behaviour is impacting office functionality.

The OPCC understands people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. The OPCC does not view behaviour unacceptable simply because a customer is forceful or determined.

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However, the behaviour of customers who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands being placed on staff. It is these actions that the OPCC aims to manage under this policy.

3.0 Unacceptable behaviour

Contact (by any form of communication) is unacceptable if it is:

- Aggressive or abusive, or
- Unreasonable persistent, or
- An unreasonable demand.

4.0 Aggressive or abusive contact

We will assess each case independently, but as a broad guide, we will not accept and will not handle communications that include:

- threats (implicit or explicit) against another person
- harassment
- continued threats
- persistent shouting, or swearing or other offensive language
- insulting or demeaning any person or group, including anything that targets race, age, sex, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or disability.

5.0 Unreasonably persistent contact

We recognise that some people might be unwilling to accept a decision or action we have taken, or that there are some things we simply cannot do. However, we may consider contact to be unreasonably persistent where we have already fully advised the customer of the decision, explained the decision to them if needed, and they continue to contact us to challenge the decision. If this leads to someone making unwarranted allegations against our colleagues, it will not be tolerated.

6.0 Unreasonable demands

Each case will be assessed independently. However, it is likely that the following types of demand will be considered unreasonable:

- timescale demands (other than those we work towards)
- making repeated or multiple demands which are substantially the same
- demands for things we cannot do, whether for practical or legal reasons.
- Unreasonable amounts of contact may also amount to an unreasonable demand. This includes inundating the OPCC with information or repetitive communications, content which is difficult to

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read or understand (subject to specific needs or adjustments), or material which is not directly relevant to our work.

7.0 Reasons for restricting customer contact

If a member of OPCC staff experience unacceptable behaviour over the phone he or she has right to either place callers on hold or end the telephone call. Staff also have the responsibility to report any instances of unacceptable behaviour to their manager in order to ensure fairness and consistency of approach when the Chief Executive is taking a decision to manage contact.

With the exception of ending a telephone call, decisions to restrict contact with the OPCC can only be authorised by the Chief Executive with careful consideration given to the circumstances of the situation. A customer will be advised in writing that their behaviour is considered to be unacceptable. They will also be advised that the OPCC may take steps to manage communication in order to handle their contact with the OPCC.

Wherever possible, the OPCC will give a customer the opportunity to adapt their behaviour or action before a decision is taken. It may be necessary to apply restrictions if all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted and the customer continues to display unacceptable behaviour that is impacting on the work of OPCC staff.

The Chief Executive should be satisfied the following criteria has been considered before any action is taken:

- Whether a concern is being, or has been, considered and addressed properly.
- Communication with the customer has been adequate and the customer is not providing any significant new information that might affect the consideration of the case.
- All efforts have been made with the customer to dispel misunderstandings and move matters towards a resolution.
- Any specific access requirements and appropriate solutions have been considered to ensure that the customer is not being denied access to the OPCC.

8.0 Managing unacceptable behaviour

The approach taken to manage unacceptable behaviour depends on its nature and extent. If it adversely affects the OPCC's ability to do its work and provide a fair service to others, it may need to restrict contact with the customer. Wherever possible, the OPCC aims to do this in a way that still allows access to its service and will advise customers prior to putting any restrictions in place.

Where a customer continues to display unacceptable behaviour the OPCC will exercise its right to restrict contact. The precise nature and action will be appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the unacceptable behaviour. It may decide to:

- Place time limits on telephone conversations
- Restrict communication to one method of contact

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- Arrange for the customer to communicate with one specific point of contact only – where appropriate to do so.
- Read and file future correspondence, but acknowledge or respond to it only if the customer provides new information or is making a new complaint.
- Refuse to consider demands to re-open a closed case.
 - Take other action that it considers appropriate

9.0 Record keeping and reviewing a decision to restrict contact

The OPCC will record all decisions to restrict contact with customers. Accurate details will be noted on the relevant case file. A decision to restrict customer contact may be reconsidered if the customer demonstrates a more acceptable approach.