



## **S4B Unacceptable Behaviour Policy**

**September 2024**

### **1. Aim**

- 1.1 S4B will engage with all customers and suppliers in a courteous, fair, and consistent manner. We do not expect our colleagues to tolerate any unacceptable behaviour, and this policy sets out the approach we will take when such circumstances emerge.
- 1.2 The Housing Ombudsman encourages landlords (and their managing agents) to have a policy in place to help manage complainants who present unacceptable behaviours.
- 1.3 S4B deems behaviour which may be perceived as abusive, offensive, or threatening as unacceptable. Customers whose conduct or actions take up inappropriate amounts of time may also be considered to be behaving in an unacceptable manner.
- 1.4 It is important to distinguish between customers who may make multiple complaints because they remain dissatisfied with the service they have received, or because they encounter multiple longstanding issues, and customers whose behaviour or conduct is intentionally unreasonable or disruptive.
- 1.5 We do recognise that customers may sometimes act out of character at times of anxiety or distress.

### **2. Definition**

2.1 S4B has adopted the definitions provided by the Housing Ombudsman. These are:

- Unreasonable demands (e.g., requesting large volumes of information, asking for responses within a short space of time, refusing to speak to an individual or insisting on speaking with another).
  - Unreasonable persistence (refusing to accept the answer that has been provided, continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence, continuously adding to, or changing the subject matter of the complaint).
  - Verbal abuse, aggression, violence (this is not just limited to actual physical or verbal abuse but can include derogatory remarks, rudeness, inflammatory allegations, and threats of violence).
  - Overload of letters, calls, emails or contact via social media (this could include the frequency of contact as well as the volume of correspondence received as well as the frequency and length of telephone calls)
- 2.2 Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the consideration of their, or other people's, complaints.



2.3 Unreasonable customer behaviour and unreasonably persistent customers are those customers who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact, hinder S4B's ability to maintain normal service.

2.4 Unreasonable complaints are those complaints made without sufficient grounds but made specifically to cause annoyance or disruption. Examples include the way or frequency that a customer raises their complaint with colleagues, or how a customer responds when informed of a decision about their complaint.

### **3. Managing Unacceptable Behaviour**

3.1 We will ensure that all customers are treated in a courteous, fair, and consistent manner. We will ensure that all complaints are investigated in accordance with S4B Complaints Policy.

3.2 Where we determine unacceptable customer behaviour is evident, a senior manager within S4B will contact the customer to discuss the concerns. The customer will be advised that their conduct is not acceptable and if appropriate, issue a warning.

3.3 Further action may be taken where the behaviour is not modified. Further action will include more formal sanctions such as:

- Restriction to email or telephone contact only.
- Providing a single point of contact to manage all contacts.
- Access to our services by appointment only.
- A limited number of contacts per day/ per week.

3.4 Any restriction that is imposed will be appropriate and proportionate and the customer will be advised of the duration of the restriction. In most cases, restrictions will apply for between 3 and 6 months. If unacceptable customer behaviour continues, the restriction would continue to be in force for a further period pending the next agreed review date.

3.5 Decisions to impose such restrictions will always be confirmed in writing and will confirm:

- Why we have taken the decision.
- The specific action being taken.
- The duration of the restriction-whether the action applies to all of the customers dealings with S4B, or whether the actions specifically relate to the issue in question -the review process of this policy; and-the right of the customer to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

3.6 Where the behaviour is extreme, or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of colleagues, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the customer warning of that action.



3.7 We will always try and resolve the concern informally and through an informal agreement. Where this is not possible, we will follow a three-stage process:

Step 1 – A service manager will discuss S4B concerns with the customer and agree a mutually suitable resolution.

Step 2 - A service manager will discuss S4B concerns with the customer and agree a suitable resolution. This will be confirmed in writing and constitute a formal warning ahead of more structured sanctions.

Step 3 – A service manager will discuss Onwards concerns with the customer and agree a series of specific sanctions. We will confirm any agreed sanctions in writing and make the necessary changes to enforce them.

#### 4 Making a new Complaint.

4.1 New complaints from customers who have been subject to this procedure will be treated on a case-by-case basis. The relevant service manager in consultation with the S4B General Manager will decide whether any restrictions which have been applied before are still appropriate and necessary in relation to the new complaint. S4B will not ignore genuine service requests or complaints where they are founded.

#### 5. Review

5.1 The complainant has the right to request a review of any decision reached in accordance with this policy. Review requests must be received within 28 days of the date of the decision.

5.2 Reviews will be undertaken by the S4B General Manager the outcome will be confirmed in writing.

Linked documents:	S4B Complaints and Compliments Policy September 2024
Date implemented:	September 2024
Policy lead:	Louise Blanchflower, S4B General Manager
Approved by:	S4B Board and Manchester City Council
Next review date:	September 2025