

Unreasonable, discriminatory and/or abusive behaviour policy

Introduction

We are committed to providing high quality, inclusive and accessible services and we welcome your feedback as it helps us to understand what we are doing well and where we can learn and improve.

There are many ways to contact us, including phone, email, post and in-person.

We recognise that in times of trouble or distress people may act out of character when they approach us. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable simply because someone is reasonably direct, frank or determined in their approach. However, our staff and volunteers have the right to carry out their work without being subjected to discrimination, harassment or abuse. We have a duty to safeguard the health and safety of our staff and volunteers and a duty of care towards our service users. We may therefore decide to restrict access to our services, including our premises, where we consider a person's behaviour to be unreasonable, discriminatory and/or abusive and likely to have a negative effect on our staff, volunteers or work.

This policy sets out the kinds of actions and behaviours that may have a negative effect, and what we will do if they occur. It applies to everyone who interacts or communicates with us, including service users, customers, donors and supporters.

We recognise that some people may have difficulties in expressing themselves or communicating clearly, especially when anxious or upset. We also understand that some people may find it difficult to identify what impact their behaviour might have on others. Where we are aware of medical conditions or disabilities that might affect a person's interaction with us, we will always provide appropriate support and consider reasonable adjustments in line with legislative requirements.

The following types of behaviour fall within this policy; however, this is not an exhaustive list. Please note, behaviour does not need to be aimed directly at us for it to be considered within the scope of this policy.

Aggressive or abusive conduct:

- Threats of violence or physical harm.
- Actual violence or physical harm.
- Behaviour or language (verbal or written) that is unwanted and/or may cause staff or volunteers to feel afraid, threatened or abused.
- Use of insulting, degrading, obscene and derogatory language including swearing.
- Harassment and discrimination such as racism, misogyny, and homophobia.

- Sexual harassment including sexual advances, comments and gestures, sexually offensive jokes, images and content.
- Refusing to leave premises, stop making phone calls or making other contact when formally requested to do so.
- False allegations against a staff member or volunteer.

Unreasonable demands:

We may decide a demand is unreasonable if it requires a disproportionate amount of time and resource to address it. For example:

- Demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale.
- Excessive contact – via phone calls, emails, letters and/or social media.
- Insistence on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff.
- Repeatedly raising new complaints without affording us the opportunity to resolve earlier complaints.
- Repeatedly changing what your complaint is about.
- Persistent refusal to accept a complaint outcome including contacting different members of staff to try to get a different outcome.
- Requiring responses to correspondence where the content is malicious.
- Refusing to engage with, and abide by, the policies and procedures of the Age UK Waltham Forest service you are accessing including misusing a service after we have explained it's intended purpose and/or demanding support for something that is outside of our remit.

Unreasonable behaviour on our premises:

We are committed to delivering services in spaces that are welcoming and safe and this includes our retail stores. We ask all service users, including customers and visitors, for their co-operation in maintaining a safe and respectful environment. Alongside the examples given above, unreasonable behaviour on our premises might include:

- Disorderly conduct, such as causing a disturbance, shouting and/or causing a nuisance to Age UK staff, volunteers, customers or visitors.
- Congregating in the building and/or obstructing thoroughfares and emergency routes and access points.
- Entering or attempting to enter restricted and/or non-public areas of the building.
- Theft/attempted theft.

- Recording or photographing people without their permission.
- Wilful damage to charity property, defacing or spoiling charity property and/or interfering with charity property.
- Failing to leave our premises when instructed to do so by a member of our team.

How we manage unreasonable, discriminatory and/or abusive behaviour

When we consider that a person's actions or behaviour are likely to have a negative effect on our staff, volunteers or work, we will, where appropriate and possible, tell them and give them the opportunity to modify their conduct. If they continue to act or behave in a way that we consider to be unreasonable, discriminatory and/or abusive we may take any of the following actions:

- Restrict or end contact on the matter including immediately ending a phone call or in-person conversation if necessary.
- Require that contact is with a specific member of staff only.
- Require that contact is made via a specific method only e.g. email.
- Suspend access to services and/or our premises including retail stores for a specific period of time or permanently.
- Request, where appropriate, that all future contact is made through a designated third party.
- Not reply to communications.
- Ban or block all future contact.
- Report the matter to the Police or appropriate governing body or take legal action. In such cases, we may not give the person prior warning.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, we will let the individual know about the action we are taking and the reason for it. This may include how long restrictions will be in place.

When making a decision, we may consider:

- how it affects our staff, volunteers and/or work,
- how it affects the individual (including their personal circumstances and any reasonable adjustments),
- the extent to which we are able to engage or provide support, and
- the extent to which the process or subject matter has been exhausted.

Decisions may be reconsidered if the individual commits to behaving in line with our policies and procedures **and**:

- an agreed period of time has passed,
- there is a more suitable alternative action available, and/or
- we receive evidence that there were exceptional reasons for the behaviour.

The welfare of our staff, volunteers and service users is paramount, as is our ability to carry out our work safely and effectively. Decisions will only be reconsidered, if it is evident the above will not be unreasonably and/or detrimentally impacted.

Complaints

If you are unhappy with a decision we have taken or any other aspect of Age UK Waltham Forest's work, we would like to hear about it. We value all feedback and welcome the opportunity to learn and improve. Complaints should be raised within 3 months of the matter in question and be directed to:

Age UK Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest Resource Hub North

58 Hall Lane

Chingford

E4 8EU

Tel: **0208 5585512**

Email: info@ageukwalthamforest.org.uk