



WHO SHOULD READ THIS?



Tenants



Agents



Landlords

OUR POLICY ON UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR BY CUSTOMERS

Effective from November 2023



PURPOSE

Our service is independent, impartial and free. We believe that customers of our service have a right to be heard, understood and respected. We work hard to be open and accessible to everyone.

Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of individuals using our service makes it very difficult for us to deal with their complaint. In a small number of cases the actions of individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff or our process.

When this happens, we have to take action to protect our staff. We also consider the impact of the behaviour on our ability to do our work and provide a service to others.

This policy explains how we will approach these situations.

ACTIONS TENANCY DEPOSIT SCHEME CONSIDERS AS UNACCEPTABLE

People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a customer approaching the TDSNI.

However, we consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on our service or unreasonable behaviour towards the TDSNI staff to be unacceptable. It is these actions that we aim to manage under this Policy.





AGGRESSIVE OR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

We understand that many customers are angry about the issues they have raised in their complaint. If that anger escalates into aggression towards TDS staff, we consider that unacceptable. Any violence or abuse towards staff will not be accepted.

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 offended, afraid, threatened or abused.

We will judge each situation individually and appreciate individuals who come to us may be upset.

Language which is designed to:




-  insult or degrade,
-  is racist,
-  sexist or homophobic; or
-  which makes serious allegations that individuals have committed criminal, corrupt or perverse conduct without any evidence is unacceptable.

We may decide that comments aimed not at us but at third parties are unacceptable because of the effect that listening or reading them may have on our staff.

UNREASONABLE DEMANDS

A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on the work of TDSNI.

Examples of this behaviour include:

-  repeatedly demanding response within an unreasonable timescale,
-  insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, when that is not possible,
-  repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.

An example of such impact would be that the demand takes up an excessive amount of staff time and in doing so disadvantages other customers and prevents their own complaint from being dealt with quickly.

UNREASONABLE LEVELS OF CONTACT




Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to our service by an individual causes problems. This can occur over a short period, for example, a number of calls in one day or hour.

It may occur over the life-span of a case or complaint when a customer repeatedly makes long telephone calls to us or inundates us with copies of information that has been sent already or that is irrelevant to the case or complaint.

We consider that the level of contact has become unacceptable when the amount of time spent talking to a customer on the telephone, or responding to, reviewing and filing emails or written correspondence impacts on our ability to deal with that case or complaint, or with other customers' case or complaint.

UNREASONABLE REFUSAL TO CO-OPERATE

When we are looking at a case or complaint, we will need to ask the individual who has complained to work with us. This can include agreeing with us:

-  the complaint we will look at,
-  to provide us with further information, evidence or comments on request, or
-  help us by summarising their concerns.

Sometimes, an individual repeatedly refuses to co-operate and this makes it difficult for us to proceed. We will always seek to assist someone if they have a specific, genuine difficulty complying with a request.

However, we consider it is unreasonable to bring a complaint to us and then not respond to reasonable requests.

UNREASONABLE USE OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Individuals with complaints about TDS have a right to pursue their concerns.

This contact becomes unreasonable when the effect of the repeated complaints is to harass, or to prevent TDS from pursuing a legitimate aim or implementing a legitimate decision.



We consider access to a complaints system to be important and it will only be in exceptional circumstances that we would consider such repeated use is unacceptable – but we reserve the right to do so in such cases.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

We understand that some customers have disabilities which may make it difficult for them to express themselves or communicate clearly, especially when they are anxious or upset.

We also recognise that some disabilities can make it difficult for customers to assess the impact that their behaviour might have on other people.

We will always consider making reasonable adjustments for a disabled customer if we are asked to do so. For example:

-  we could consider using different methods of communication,
-  agree to give clear warnings when we feel that a customer's behaviour is unacceptable so that they have the opportunity to change it.

However, we would not consider it to be reasonable to expect our staff to accept being subjected to aggressive, offensive or abusive actions, language or behaviour. We may still use the policy if there are actions or behaviours which are having a negative effect on our staff or our work.

For further information on reasonable adjustments, please refer to our reasonable adjustment policy.

Service Complaints



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