

YORKSHIRE WATER CUSTOMER CONDUCT POLICY

1 Purpose

- 1.1 We aim to provide a high standard of service and to always treat customers with courtesy and fairness. We believe that our customers have a right to be heard, understood and respected.
- 1.2 In the interest of Health and Safety we have a duty to protect our staff from those customers who might use unacceptable behaviour against them.
- 1.3 We expect customers to show courtesy and respect when dealing with our staff.
- 1.4 We understand that occasionally the behaviour or actions of individual customers make it very difficult for us to help them.
- 1.5 The actions we consider to be unacceptable include:
- aggressive or abusive behaviour
 - unreasonable demands and/or unreasonable levels of contact
- 1.6 If we consider a customer's behaviour to be unacceptable (whether verbal or written) we may decide not to respond. Under these circumstances the customer's contact will not be handled under the terms of our Customer Charter.
- 1.7 We do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable customer behaviour and the purpose of this guidance is to provide clear information on the action staff should take when an incident arises.

2 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

- 2.1 We understand that customers can become frustrated or angry when they feel that matters they have raised are not been dealt with as they wish.
- 2.2 If anger, aggression or abuse is directed at one of our staff, (including behaviour used to provoke, annoy, embarrass, intimidate and discriminate) this is not acceptable. This includes language (verbal or written) used that causes an individual to feel insulted, offended, threatened or afraid.
- 2.3 If a member of staff takes a telephone call from an aggressive, abusive or threatening customer, they can advise the caller that we consider their actions unacceptable and they will end the call if it continues. If the unacceptable behaviour continues the staff member can terminate the call, explaining why to the customer and must inform a line manager straight away. The line manager will decide if they need to take any other action that they consider appropriate to the circumstances.
- 2.4 If a member of staff receives written correspondence containing aggressive, abusive or threatening comments, which they feel is unacceptable, they should discuss this with a line manager. The line manager will decide if they need to take any other action that they consider appropriate to the circumstances. This action may include sending written notice to the writer explaining that if any further unacceptable correspondence is received that we will not reply. Unacceptable correspondence can be excluded from our Customer Charter payments or commitments.
- 2.5 We may refer the matter to the Police where a criminal offence has been threatened or committed.
- 2.6 We may take legal action when we consider it appropriate.

3 Unreasonable demands and/or unreasonable levels of contact

3.1 Examples of this behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- multiple repeat contacts about the same issue, including long telephone calls over a short period of time
- insisting on speaking to a member of staff, even when it isn't possible
- contacting different people within the company trying to take advantage of the differing responses they may receive
- excessive number of telephone calls, emails or letters
- persistent refusal to accept the outcome of previous contact(s)
- repeatedly providing the same information, which is not required
- repeated contacts for the purpose to avoid paying a debt

3.2 Dealing with this type of behaviour requires a disproportionate amount of resource and can be difficult/stressful for staff to deal with. If a member of staff feels unreasonable demands and/or unreasonable levels of contact are being made, they should discuss this with a line manager. The line manager will decide if they need to take any other action that they consider appropriate to the circumstances

3.3 When we believe that unreasonable customer demands are made and/or the level of contact is unreasonable we may decide to:

- restrict the communication method that we use. For example, written correspondence only or telephone calls only
- restrict contact to a nominated individual who will deal with future calls and correspondence
- refuse to correspond further with a customer, returning any documents they sent
- take any further action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances

3.4 When we put a contact restriction in place this will be authorised by a line manager, whether it is a temporary or permanent restriction.

3.5 When we put a contact restriction in place we will inform the customer by letter, email or telephone call to let them know:

- the reason why we consider their behaviour to be unacceptable
- details of earlier warning(s) about their conduct
- the restriction we are imposing
- how long the restriction will last

4 Taking action

4.1 Before we take any action we will give the customer the opportunity to change their behaviour.

4.2 We will always inform customers why a decision has been made.

4.3 We reserve the right to review our decision at any time.