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## 1. Our Mission and Values

### **Building better lives.**

We exist to meet the greatest need in society through building better lives. We do this as both as an actively developing and tenant-focused landlord, and as a major provider of care, support and a range of local initiatives to address social injustice and inequality.

We empower people through tenant-led, co-operative and mutual housing – creating diverse neighbourhoods where each individual, family and community has the best opportunities to live independently. Through development we create quality new homes and sustainable communities where people can enjoy happiness, health and prosperity – the vital foundations for successful and fulfilling lives.

Where other services can no longer deliver, when opportunities dry up, when funding is unavailable, we remain the organisation that can and will help the people in the greatest need.

## 2. Overview

GreenSquareAccord believe its colleagues are entitled to carry out their duties free of fear, abuse, aggression and threat to themselves, their friends, or their families. The policy sets out our approach in situations where behaviour may be considered unacceptable.

\*Where the term colleague is used, this also includes contractors and partners.

### 3. Aims and objectives

- ◆ For our customers and communities to fully understand our approach to unacceptable behaviour
- ◆ For our colleagues to carry out their duties free from fear, abuse, aggression or threat

### 4. Key considerations

- ◆ Customers have a right to be heard and understood, and to be dealt with fairly, honestly and consistently
- ◆ Colleagues should be equipped to deal with difficult situations professionally and feel supported whenever action is necessary against a perpetrator, this may include deciding to leave a home visit for example

### 5. Scope

This policy applies to all colleagues across GreenSquareAccord (including contractors employed on our behalf) and extends to all customers and also members of the public who GreenSquareAccord colleagues come into contact with during the course of their duties.

### 6. Our policy

GreenSquareAccord believe its colleagues are entitled to carry out their duties free of fear, abuse, aggression and threat to themselves, their friends, or their families. We recognise some of the restrictions and conditions on our service provision, and messages colleagues need to give relating to these, may upset or disappoint our customers. This does not mean we will accept or tolerate unacceptable behaviour in response to them.

Where colleagues are subject to unacceptable behaviour, we will take action to protect them. We will ensure this behaviour does not disrupt services to others and, where necessary, take robust and decisive action against the person responsible for the behaviour.

Customers who wish to raise concerns regarding colleague behaviour should do this through our complaints process.

#### What is 'unacceptable'

We expect our colleagues to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or personally directed abuse towards colleagues is unacceptable. We know the anger felt by some complainants, for example, involves the subject matter of their complaint and just because someone is assertive or determined we won't consider their behaviour to be unacceptable. However, it is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards colleagues or when behaviour is so demanding or persistent it places unreasonable demands on them.

Unacceptable behaviour is not restricted to acts of violence or aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether oral or written) which may cause colleagues to feel afraid, threatened, or abused. This behaviour may be exhibited by customers, service users, or their families and support network.

Different people may respond differently to the same abuse or event, dependant on, for example, their current mood, previous experience, and the situation. We believe it's crucial we accept the feelings of the person subject to the unacceptable behaviour. We should also be mindful that bystanders and third parties can also be impacted by such incidents.

Examples of unacceptable behaviours are:

- ◆ physical violence
- ◆ threats of violence
- ◆ personal verbal abuse
- ◆ derogatory remarks
- ◆ sexually inappropriate behaviour
- ◆ offensive gestures
- ◆ excessive swearing
- ◆ rudeness
- ◆ inflammatory statements
- ◆ discriminatory language
- ◆ unsubstantiated allegations
- ◆ personal attacks via social media
- ◆ passive aggressive communication

Unacceptable behaviour can also be cumulative. Remarks which in themselves barely merit attention, may, over time and when taken together, count as being unacceptable or insulting. When any colleagues feels this may be the case, they should record this behaviour so patterns can be identified.

Demanding or persistent behaviour can impact the level of service we are able to offer to others. Examples of this can include:

- ◆ unreasonable demands - requesting large volumes of information, asking for multiple responses within a short space of time or refusing to speak to an individual or insisting on speaking with another for example
- ◆ unreasonable persistence - refusing to accept the answer provided, continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence or continuously adding to or changing the subject matter of the complaint for example
- ◆ overload of letters, calls, emails or contact using social media. This could include the frequency of contact as well as the volume of correspondence received and length of telephone calls for example
- ◆ unreasonable levels of contact on the same issue to multiple colleagues and/or external agencies

It's equally important we recognise all customers have a right to be heard, understood and respected. We will deal with all our customers fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately including those whose actions are considered unacceptable. We may need or want to consider working with other individuals who can represent customers, or a multi-agency approach where necessary if customers are receiving support for example.

Where there are counter allegations against an employee they will be investigated fully using the appropriate human resources policy. Unacceptable behaviour by a colleague towards a colleague will also be managed using the appropriate human resources policy.

### **Managing unacceptable behaviour**

We will always try and manage what we consider to be unacceptable behaviour by reaching a voluntary and informal agreement before taking any formal action. We believe it's important to give the person displaying the behaviour time to consider what they have done and make adjustments. We are open to trying to improve the situation by using mediation or advocacy through third parties as well.

Before taking any formal steps we will issue a warning which explains what behaviour we consider to be unacceptable and the formal steps we may take if the behaviour continues. Examples of formal steps we may take include:

- ◆ providing a single point of contact
- ◆ limiting contact to a single method; writing, email or telephone only
- ◆ limiting contact to certain times or a limited number of times per week or month
- ◆ declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless additional evidence or information is provided
- ◆ only considering a certain number of issues in a specific period

There may be occasions where an informal approach to managing the behaviour is not possible, for example, if a referral is made to the SAFE Register and the issue is recorded on the Register.

In cases where extreme behaviour such as physical violence or harassment, we may involve the police, take legal action and/or end direct contact with the perpetrator.

Any restrictions imposed will be agreed with the relevant Head of Service and will be reviewed at a time agreed at the outset. If the behaviour has improved during that time we will consider lifting the restriction. If not we will explain why the restriction is to stay in place and when the next review date will be. Any restriction imposed can be appealed to an Executive Director.

## **7. Roles & responsibilities**

All colleagues have a responsibility to report behaviour they feel is unacceptable. This is to:

- ◆ build a picture of potentially threatening individuals' behaviour

- ◆ enable the business to put safeguards in place
- ◆ protect others and
- ◆ create a culture of our colleagues feeling and being safe at work.

### **Line managers**

Line managers should discuss any reports of issues of such behaviour, offer support and listen to their colleagues concerns and worries. Allegations of unacceptable behaviour are fully investigated to ensure the wider context and situation are understood. Managers should, jointly with colleagues, consider a range of responses to unacceptable behaviour as detailed in our Unacceptable Behaviour Procedure.

### **Health and Safety**

The Health and Safety management team will monitor all incident reports for patterns. They will ensure actions are completed and review necessary changes other related policies or procedures, as well as ensuring managers are providing adequate support to colleagues, and that adequate training is being provided.

### **Human resources**

The learning and development function is responsible for the provision of appropriate training in response to requests from managers or the Health and Safety Committee.

## **8. Monitoring and reporting**

Key monitoring is to be done by the Health and Safety Management team. Where required, they will escalate issues to the appropriate Head of Service or Director.

Heads of Service are to ensure line managers are considering colleague safety and customer behaviour issues for their colleagues where there are risks or issues.

## **9. Diversity and inclusion**

Some unacceptable behaviour can be related to abuse focusing on a person's race, colour, gender or other specific characteristic. Where colleagues or managers feel this is an issue in any incident of unacceptable behaviour, this should be particularly highlighted, as further action may be necessary.

Colleagues should be aware people with vulnerabilities or medical conditions can behave differently to how we would behave ourselves. For example:

- ◆ people with autism may not be good at making eye contact, may take sayings literally (saying a problem could 'blow up' could lead them to think this will literally happen)
- ◆ people with learning difficulties may be very tactile and less able to control their emotions

- ◆ there are situations where we may interact with customers who have diagnosed or perceived cognitive impairment – and such situations may be exempt from this policy – where colleagues should refer to the Care and Support Positive Behaviour Support Procedure for guidance

We will treat everyone with dignity and respect at all times and this is expected of our customers, service users (and their families) and of those in the communities in which we work.

## 10. Communication, training and implementation

Training should be given to colleagues on these issues in line with our procedures. Colleagues should be aware and prepared for how people could react to them.

This policy is available to customers via our website, to ensure awareness of how GreenSquareAccord will deal with instances of unacceptable behaviour

## 11. Legal and regulatory framework

The criminal and civil law of England applies. This includes:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Employment Act 2008
- Housing Act 2004
- Equalities Act 2010