



## Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

### Unacceptable Actions Guidance

#### Introduction

SPT is committed to providing a fair and accessible service to all.

We believe that everyone who contacts us has the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

We also believe that our staff have the same rights, and we must provide a safe working environment for our staff.

This document sets out SPT's approach on the relatively few occasions we consider people's actions or behaviour to be unacceptable.

#### Unacceptable Actions

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 other people.

We will always consider making reasonable adjustments if we are asked to do so - but we may still have to act if actions or behaviours are having a negative effect on our staff or our work.

Actions SPT considers to be unacceptable include:

##### Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We understand that many complainants are angry about the issues they have raised in their complaint. If that anger escalates into aggression towards SPT 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.

##### Unreasonable demands

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

Examples include:

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



### Unreasonable levels of contact

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to our premises by an individual causes problems. This can occur over a short period, for example, a number of calls in one day, or it may occur over the life-span of a complaint when a complainant repeatedly makes long telephone calls to us or inundates us with correspondence that is irrelevant to the matter in hand.

### Unreasonable refusal to co-operate

When we are looking at a complaint, we will need to ask the individual who has complained to work with us.

Where an individual repeatedly refuses to co-operate and this makes it difficult for us to proceed, we will always seek to assist 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.

### **Managing unacceptable behaviour**

The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards SPT staff is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact with the complainant. We may report incidents to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

SPT staff will end telephone calls if they consider the caller aggressive, abusive or offensive. SPT staff have the right to make this decision, to tell the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and end the call if the behaviour persists.

When dealing with other categories of unreasonable behaviour we will try to ensure that any action we take is the minimum required to solve the problem, taking into account relevant personal circumstances including the seriousness of the complaint and the needs of the individual.

We may decide to:

- restrict contact to a nominated member of SPT staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence from the complainant.
- restrict contact from the complainant to writing only.
- in exceptional cases, we reserve the right to refuse to consider a complaint or future complaints from an individual.
- in extreme situations, we will tell the complainant in writing that their name is on a 'no personal contact' list. This means that we will limit contact with them to through a third party.

We will always tell the complainant what action we are taking and why.

### **The process we follow to make decisions about unreasonable behaviour**

Any member of SPT staff who directly experiences aggressive or abusive behaviour from a complainant has the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with this Guidance.



With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact with SPT are only taken after careful consideration of the situation by a more senior member of staff. Wherever possible, we will give a complainant the opportunity to change their behaviour or action before a decision is taken.

#### How we let people know we have made this decision

When an SPT employee makes an immediate decision in response to offensive, aggressive or abusive behaviour, the complainant is advised at the time of the incident.

When a decision has been made to restrict future contact, a complainant will be given the reason for this decision in writing, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.

A complainant can appeal a decision to restrict contact.

A senior member of staff who was not involved in the original decision will consider the appeal. They will make their decision based on the evidence available to them, and will advise the complainant in writing that either the restricted contact arrangements still apply, or a different course of action has been agreed.

We may review the restriction periodically or on further request after a period of time has passed.

#### How we record a decision to restrict contact

We record all incidents of unacceptable actions by complainants. Where it is decided to restrict complainant contact, an entry noting this is made in the relevant file and on appropriate computer records.