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1 Viewpoint's Values

Viewpoint is here to help people enjoy their later years. Everything we do is about realising this vision, which is supported by the following straightforward set of values:

- Inspire with positive smiles and words;
- Say 'yes I can and I will';
- Celebrate age, experience and wisdom;
- Do according to our customers' wishes and ambitions;
- Treat people (everyone is a VIP) as we would a "loved one";
- Work hard, have fun and laugh;
- Stay courageous, creative and ahead of the game; and
- Work with those that share our values.

These promises shape us. They're a commitment to our tenants, residents, staff and suppliers. They are fundamental to every single plan, decision and project we embark on.

2 Policy Statement

This policy sets out our approach to customers whose actions or behaviour we consider unacceptable

3 Aim

We believe that our customers have a right to be heard, understood and respected and we work hard to be open and accessible. The vast majority of customers we come into contact with treat our staff with respect.

People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to their contact, service request or complaint coming to us. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because a customer is forceful or determined. In fact, we accept that being persistent can be a positive advantage when pursuing a concern or complaint.

However, we do consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on our operations or unreasonable behaviour towards our staff to be unacceptable. It is these actions that we consider unacceptable and which we aim to manage under this policy.

This policy is required to address the limited number of cases where the behaviour or actions of individuals using our services make it very difficult for us to deal with their service request or complaint. In a small number of cases the actions become unacceptable because they are abusive to our staff, stop us doing our work or providing a service to others.

4 Legislation/related policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Complaints Handling procedures.

5 Scope

The term staff includes direct employees of Association, its governing body members, contractors, consultants and agents.

Our tenancy agreement and occupancy agreements make it clear that customers are expected to behave appropriately towards staff

5.1 Actions Viewpoint considers to be unacceptable

5.1.1 Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We understand that many complainants are angry about the issues they have raised with us, If that anger escalates into aggression towards our staff, we consider that an unacceptable action and operate a zero tolerance approach to such behaviour. Any violence or abuse towards staff will not be accepted.

Violence or abuse 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 afraid, threatened or abused, and may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness.

We also consider inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations to be abusive behaviour.

5.1.2 Unreasonable demands

A demand becomes unreasonable and unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on the work of Viewpoint. For example, the demand takes up an excessive amount of staff time and in so doing leads to other customers being disadvantaged. What amounts to unreasonable demand will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and seriousness of the issues raised.

Examples of actions grouped under this heading include:

- Demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff
- Repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns
- Insisting on being cared for by particular member(s) of staff
- Continual phone calls, e mails or letters

5.1.3 Unreasonable levels of contact

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to Viewpoint by an individual causes problems.

This can occur over a short period, for example, a number of calls in one day or one hour. It may occur over the life-span of an engagement or a complaint when a customer repeatedly makes long telephone calls to us or inundates us with requests or demands for copies of information that has been sent already or that is irrelevant to the complaint.

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

5.1.4 Unreasonable use of the complaints process

We recognise that customers have the right to complain more than once as they have a continuing relationship with the Association, and subsequent service request and incidents may occur. We consider access to a complaints system to be a critical element of our service arrangements. Individuals with complaints about Viewpoint have the right to pursue their concerns through a range of means.

However, this contact becomes unreasonable when the effect of the repeated complaints is to harass, or to prevent us from pursuing a legitimate aim or implementing a legitimate decision. 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 those exceptional cases.

All complaints will be dealt with as per the Policy and should customers email senior staff direct these will be passed to the relevant operational staff for consideration.

5.2 How we manage aggressive or abusive behaviour

The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse, intimidation or harassment, towards staff is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact with the customer and is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact. It may lead to action for breach of tenancy or occupancy agreement. Incidents may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened or instances of hate crime.

We will not accept any correspondence (letter, email or via social media) that is abusive to staff or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence. We will tell the complainant that we consider their language offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful and ask them to stop using such language. We will state that we will not respond to their correspondence if the action or behaviour continues.

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

In extreme situations, we will tell the customer in writing that their name is on a “no personal contact” list. This means that we will limit contact with them to either written communication or through a third party.

5.3 Managing unreasonable behaviour

We have to take action when unreasonable behaviour impairs the functioning of our services.

We aim to do this in a way that allows a customer to progress through our processes. 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.

Where a customer repeatedly phones, visits the office, raises repeated issues, or sends large numbers of e mails, letters and documents where their relevance isn't clear, we may decide to:

- Limit contact to telephone calls from the customer at set times on set days
- Restrict contact to a nominated member of Viewpoint staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence from the customer
- See the customer by appointment only
- Restrict contact from the customer to writing only
- Return any documents to the customer or, in extreme cases, advise the customer that further irrelevant documents will be destroyed
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate
- Restrict contact by engaging the services of a third party or legal representative to act on our behalf.

Where we consider continued correspondence on a wide range of issues to be excessive, we may tell the customer that only a certain number of issues will be considered in a given period and ask them to limit or focus their requests accordingly.

In exceptional cases, we reserve the right to refuse to consider a complaint or future complaints from an individual. We will take into account the impact on the individual and also whether there would be a broader tenant/resident/public interest in considering the complaint further.

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

5.4 How we make decisions about unreasonable behaviour

Any member of Viewpoint 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 policy.

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

5.5 How we let people know we have made this decision

When a Viewpoint employee makes an immediate decision in response to aggressive or abusive behaviour, the customer is advised at the time of the incident. When a decision has been made by a senior manager, a customer will always be advised in writing (this can be supplemented if written communication is not the most appropriate form for the individual) why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time that these restrictions will be in place. This ensures that the customer has a record of the decision.

5.6 The process for appealing a decision to restrict contact

It is important that a decision can be reconsidered. A customer has 20 working days to appeal a decision to restrict contact. If they do this, we will only consider arguments that relate to the restriction and not to either the complaint made to us or to our decision to close a complaint.

Grounds for an appeal could include, for example, a customer saying that:

- their actions were wrongly identified as unacceptable;
- the restrictions were disproportionate
- the restrictions will adversely impact on the individual because of personal circumstances.

An Executive Team member who was not involved in the original decision will consider the appeal. They have discretion to remove or vary the restriction as they think best. They will make their decision based on the evidence available to them. They must advise the customer in writing (this can be supplemented if written communication is not the most appropriate form for the individual) that either the restricted contact arrangements will still apply or a different course of action has been agreed.

6 Compliance & Support

Staff should familiarise themselves with this policy and procedures. Viewpoint will provide relevant staff with training and support to deal with unacceptable behaviour and actions. Additional support should be requested from line management if required.

7 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Following an initial Equality Impact Assessment screening we confirm no person, either individually or by group, would be discriminated against by this policy.

Viewpoint aims to design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our service population and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others. It takes into account the Equality Act 2010 and promotes equal opportunities for all. This document has been assessed to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment on grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion, age, ethnic origin, nationality, or disability. Members of staff, volunteers or members of the public may request assistance with this policy if they have particular needs. Upon request, Viewpoint will make information available in alternative formats to overcome communication barriers.

8 Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)

No data protection implications have been identified in relation to the review of this policy, and consequently a PIA has not been completed.

9 Monitoring & Evaluation

Viewpoint's Unacceptable Actions Policy will be fair, reliable, robust and auditable, i.e. capable of scrutiny.

Viewpoint will ensure our policy and procedures are reviewed by an external professional law provider to check legal compliance and fairness.

10 Review of Policy

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with any legislative requirements.