

Policy on disruptive, unreasonably persistent complainants

- 1 Standards for England is accountable for the proper use of public money and must ensure that the money is spent wisely and that the work of the organisation is not disrupted to the detriment of our customers.
- 2 We are committed to dealing with all allegations and customer queries fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service. As part of this service we do not normally limit the contact complainants have with us. We will make every effort to ensure that our service is accessible to all of our customers. To achieve this outcome we will make reasonable adjustments to meet the individual and particular needs of anyone who contacts us
- 3 However there are a small number of complainants who, because of the nature and frequency of their contact with Standards for England, hinder our consideration of their, or other people's, allegations. We refer to such complainants as 'persistent complainants' and, in exceptional cases, where this contact is unreasonable, we will take action to limit their contact with our organisation
- 4 When we consider that a customer's level of contact is unreasonably persistent we will tell them why we believe that their behaviour falls into this category, and explain why we would like them to change it. If possible, we will make adjustments to our service to help them to do so. If the behaviour continues, we may take action to restrict the customer's contact with our organisation.
- 5 The decision to restrict access to our service is taken at a senior level and any restrictions imposed are appropriate and proportionate. The options we are most likely to consider are:
 - requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only)
 - requiring contact to take place with a named officer;
 - restricting telephone calls to specified days and times;
 - asking the customer to enter into an agreement with us about their conduct; and/or
 - asking the customer to contact us through an advocate.
- 6 In all cases we will write to tell the customer why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable, what action we are taking and the duration of that action. We will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it and we will consider any response carefully.
- 7 Where, despite any adjustments we have made, a customer continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable, we may have to decide to terminate contact with that customer.
- 8 Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of the Standards for England's staff or others, we will consider other options, for example, reporting the matter to the police or taking

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legal action. In such cases, we may not give the customer prior warning of that action.

- 9 If the behaviour continues, we will write to the complainant explaining that we are limiting their access to our office, how that affects them and for how long. We will also tell them how they can complain if they disagree with that decision.