



Dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Abusive Individuals Policy			
Last Reviewed	April 2025	Next Review	April 2027
Responsible Officer	Director of Operations		

**Policy Statement:** Freebridge believe that all customers should have opportunity to express their views, give feedback on our services, and access our complaints process. We also understand that customers will not always be happy with our actions or decisions, however we firmly believe that our colleagues should be able to provide services protected from any abusive behaviour, unnecessary distress or repeated requests that waste Freebridge's resources.

Freebridge is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly. On very rare occasions, there are a small number of people who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact delay the consideration of other people's complaints. These are referred to as 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and we will take action to limit their impact on our colleagues.

Delivering an excellent service is a priority for our colleagues and we will not tolerate them being exposed to abuse. This includes intimidating, aggressive, and threatening behaviour. If this does happen, we will, again, take action to limit these individuals' contact with our colleagues.

#### **Policy Detail:**

We define an unreasonably persistent complainant as someone who:

- Continues to make the same or very similar complaint once the complaint process has been completed, or
- Continues to make a complaint that we do not consider meets our definition of a complaint, or
- Makes repeated complaints, all a similar nature and refuses all attempts by Freebridge to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

We define an abusive individual as someone who:

- Behaves in such a way that is verbally or physically abusive, and whose behaviour causes unnecessary distress to an employee. This includes intimidating, aggressive and threatening conduct.

We recognise where complainants may be vulnerable and we make reasonable adjustments to accommodate this to allow them to continue to provide feedback or to make a complaint.

## **Restrictions likely to be imposed**

- Requesting contact in a particular form (for example letters only).
- Requiring contact to take place with a named colleague.
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times.
- Restricting access to our office.
- Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future contact with us

Except in the rare circumstances where we have reasonable evidence to suggest that an individual poses a serious risk to the safety of colleagues, customers will always be provided with at least one channel of communication with the organisation, to enable us to continue to provide services.

## **How the process works**

Each case is considered on its own merits, and a decision will be reached by our Review Board, comprising of:

- A member of the Executive Team
- Complaints Manager
- Head of Service
- Member of our Board/Chair of the Operations Committee

The Review Board will meet to:

- Assess each case carefully considering all information available.
- Review whether all relevant policies and procedures have been followed.
- Take account of any vulnerabilities or mitigating factors that we are, or could reasonably be, aware of.
- Agree the content of the communication to the individual to confirm what action will be taken, what restrictions may be put in place and when this will be reviewed.

## **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

When meeting to consider what action might be taken, the Review Board will also consider whether it may be appropriate to offer mediation between the individual concerned and an officer from Freebridge.

Where this is offered, the mediation will be carried out by a third party agreed by both Freebridge and the customer concerned.

## **Declining Complaints**

Customers who have been considered under this Policy for making persistent complaints will still be able to give feedback to Freebridge; these customers will not be restricted from taking part in any surveying or mystery shopping opportunities.

New complaints from these customers will also be treated on their merits and reviewed to determine whether they are considered to be relating to a matter not previously considered, in which case a complaint will be opened.

Where it is considered that the complaint is the same as one previously considered then the customer will be notified of this in writing and provided with details of how this can be appealed with the Housing Ombudsman.

## **Monitoring**

On a day-to-day basis, the Director of Operations will be responsible for establishing appropriate complaint systems and processes are in place to ensure activities are well managed and controlled.