



Policy for dealing with unacceptable caller behaviour

1 Overview

- 1.1 At The Law Society, we believe that all individuals have a right to be heard, understood and respected.
- 1.2 We also believe that our staff have the right to work in a safe environment, free from any abuse or harm caused by others.
- 1.3 We expect all individuals to treat our staff with courtesy and respect at all times.
- 1.4 In a small number of cases the actions of some individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff and/or our processes.
- 1.5 We do not view an action as unacceptable, just because a person is forceful or determined. However, we do consider actions that result in unreasonable demands and/or abusive behaviour to be unacceptable.
- 1.6 There are a range of actions we consider to be unacceptable, which can be best grouped as follows:
 - Aggressive or abusive behaviour; and
 - Unreasonable demands and/or unreasonable levels of contact.

2. Aggressive or abusive behaviour

- 2.1 We understand that callers can become stressed, if a caller becomes angry and that anger escalates into aggression or abuse towards our staff, we consider this unacceptable.
- 2.2 Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes 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, shouting down or repeatedly talking over. We also consider inflammatory statements, remarks of a discriminatory nature and unsubstantiated allegations, to be abusive behaviour. Where an individual is aggressive or abusive, we may decide to:
 - Advise the individual that we consider their actions offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful and ask them to stop;
 - End telephone calls without further warning;

- Terminate all direct contact with the caller;
- Notify the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened; against other parties or we feel the caller may harm themselves.
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances.

3. Unreasonable demands and / or unreasonable levels of contact

3.1 A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to impact excessively on the work of our staff, or when dealing with the matter takes up an excessive amount of time and in so doing, disadvantages others.

3.2 Where an individual is unreasonably demanding, repeatedly contacts us in person, by phone, email etc., contacts various staff members about the same issue, raises the same issue repeatedly, or sends us large numbers of documents about which the relevance is not clear, we may decide to:

- Limit contact to telephone calls from the person at set times on set days;
- Restrict contact to a nominated member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence;
- Restrict contact to written correspondence only;
- Refuse to deal with further correspondence and return any documents;
- Advise the person that further irrelevant documentation will be destroyed; and
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances.

4. Taking action

4.1 Before we take any action, we will give the individual the opportunity to modify their behaviour. If the behaviour continues, we will take action as set out in this document.

4.2 Individuals will be told why a decision has been made, what the alternative arrangements will be and the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.