

# **Abusive or Persistent Callers Policy**

September 2025

# Abusive or persistent callers policy

Persistent or abusive callers are not always seen as a serious issue, but any abusive behaviour, including people who continue to call after being told we can no longer assist them, can have long-term effects on the health and wellbeing of staff.

There may be occasions where staff or volunteers deal with callers whose behaviour we consider to be unreasonable, abusive, or persistent.

When considering what constitutes unreasonable behaviour, we will take into account the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustment as appropriate.

## What is unreasonable behaviour?

We consider the following to be examples of unreasonable behaviour:

- Refusing to accept that certain requests are not within the remit of Healthwatch Lambeth.
- Contacting us repeatedly about the same or similar issues when we are unable to provide further information, including pursuing the same issue with various members of staff.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails, or letters, expecting immediate responses.
- Using derogatory, threatening, offensive, or abusive language.

## Initial steps

Staff and volunteers who believe they have a caller that is behaving unreasonably should consider the following steps:

- Was the caller struggling to explain the nature of their call, and therefore, could the lack of clarity from the caller lead to the perception of unreasonable behaviour?
- Does the nature or manner of the call(s) constitute a safeguarding issue?

- Does the caller have a disability or condition which affects how they communicate? Reasonable adjustments may need to be made.
- Has the staff member or volunteer checked the Information and Signposting database for any notes or warning flags recorded about this contact?
- Has the staff member or volunteer been clear with the caller about the role of Healthwatch Lambeth and what we can and can't do to support them?

If a staff member or volunteer feels that all relevant adjustments and expectations have been met during the call, they should escalate their concerns to the Chief Executive Officer.

## Dealing with unreasonable behaviour

Healthwatch Lambeth does not expect staff or volunteers to tolerate any behaviour that is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

The following steps can be taken:

1. Make clear to the caller that you feel that their behaviour is unreasonable. This can include being kept on the phone for an unreasonable length of time.
2. If felt necessary, warn the caller that the call will be terminated if they persist with their behaviour.
3. Terminate the call and report the incident to Healthwatch Lambeth CEO and record it in the Information and Signposting database.

For callers that persist to call with the same concern or complaint, we should advise that we will no longer engage with them over the same issue and it will be at the discretion of the Chief Executive if we respond further.

Notes should be taken regarding a caller's unreasonable behaviour and recorded in the Information and Signposting database, even when a call is not terminated by a colleague.

In exceptional circumstances, and to protect colleagues, a decision may be taken to contact the police.

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