

Unacceptable User Advice Cards

We are continually looking for ways to support members in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. We have put together a document with advice cards to provide landlords with guidance when handling complaints from residents. These advice cards consist of common unacceptable calls from users of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and suggested ways used by our colleagues to deal with these calls. Some examples include angry callers, accusations and allegations, callers who won't stop talking, callers who threaten our colleagues and many more.

Contents

Angry caller

Accusations and allegations

Won't stop talking

Threats

Complainant expressing suicidal feelings

Contacting lots of different colleagues

Going round in circles

Proactively questioning whether a reasonable adjustment is required

Too much irrelevant information

2
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

Angry caller

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
I can hear you are very angry.		Record phone note on CMS
I understand why that would be upsetting/I agree that would be frustrating.	If the caller moderates their behaviour consider continuing with call.	Take a break
I understand your position and why you feel strongly about this and we have looked at this carefully and we have a different view.		Talk to a colleague
I can understand you're angry, let me see what I can do to give you advice on the matter.		
I would appreciate it if you could lower your voice.		

3
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

Escalation		
A few minutes ago, you said you would lower your voice and stop shouting and we were making good progress but you have started again.	If caller moderates their behaviour when asked, consider continuing the call.	Take a break Talk to a colleague Record call and actions on CMS.
I'm sorry you feel that way – we can't solve the problem whilst you continue to shout at me.	If caller continues to shout having been given an initial warning consider ending the call.	Line manager records Unacceptable User Policy action taken and places alert on CMS
If you stop shouting, I'm sure I can help you.	If caller starts shouting having stopped following initial warning move to end the call.	
If you don't stop shouting, I'm afraid I'm going to have to end this call.		
I now intend to end this call as I have advised you that I will not continue being shouted at, I have asked you (previously 2 or 3 times) to stop shouting at me and you have continued. I am now ending the call, goodbye.	End call Advise Line Manager	

4
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

Accusations and allegations

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
<p>We are committed to offering a high-quality service and we believe that complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected.</p> <p>However, I would like to make you aware that we consider unsubstantiated allegations to be abusive behaviour.</p>	<p>Consider if you should end the call.</p> <p>Obtain a copy of the call recording.</p> <p>Bring to your Line manager's attention.</p> <p>Consider unacceptable user policy</p>	<p>Talk to a colleague</p> <p>Talk to your line manager</p> <p>Record on CMS.</p>

5
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

Threats

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
<p>Threats made against the staff member or organisation</p> <p>We do not tolerate serious threats and what you've just said to me I consider to be a serious threat. I am required to take action on any serious threats made to this office by notifying a senior manager that you have made a threat and possibly the police.</p> <p>I shall now end this call.</p>	<p>End the call</p> <p>Immediately alert a manager.</p> <p>Consider if the police should be involved.</p> <p>Obtain the recording of the call.</p> <p>Unacceptable User policy decision likely restrict access</p>	<p>Record on CMS</p> <p>Agree action with a manager.</p> <p>If agreed contact the police.</p> <p>Record note on CMS</p> <p>Add alert to case record on CMS.</p>

6
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

Won't stop talking

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
<p>Thank you for letting me continue...</p> <p>We have been talking for a while now, I'd like to summarise what we have agreed and agree what you/I are going to do. I don't want to take up any more of your time.</p> <p>I need to ask you some questions.</p> <p>I need to let you know what I'm going to do next.</p> <p>I need to take time to consider the information you have given me and I will get back to you.</p> <p>I have explained why I am unable to help.</p>	<p>If you agree actions to take, follow up with a summary email/letter.</p> <p>Should you promise to get back to the caller, ensure you do.</p>	<p>Record on CMS</p> <p>Talk to a colleague</p>
<p>Tip</p> <p>Going silent will often prompt the other person to go silent too.</p> <p>However, when doing so you must be ready with a statement which takes the conversation forward.</p>		

Complainant expressing suicidal feelings

You might say	Action	Internal
<p>Let me just check what I've hear; did you say you were thinking about taking your own life?</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>I can't imagine how you are feeling just now and I can hear you are very distressed.</p>	<p>Ask if there is someone they can contact e.g. relative, support worker/mental health professional.</p> <p>Explain that you are here to assist with their complaint.</p> <p>And follow promptly with:</p> <p>Suggestion they might want to contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Samaritans who offer a 24-hour helpline – 116 123 <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mind for specialist information 0300 123 3393 info@mind.org.uk Text: 86463 9am-6pm Monday to Friday (excl Bank Hols) 	<p>Take a break</p> <p>Talk to a colleague</p> <p>Tell your manager</p> <p>Is the Unacceptable User Policy appropriate?</p> <p>Record all actions on the CMS.</p>

8
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

	If you believe there is a real risk that they are considering suicide – contact the police.	Talk to your/a manager promptly before doing so.
--	---	--

Contacting lots of different colleagues

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
I know that you have also spoken to X/Y/Z about this matter recently. My colleagues and I have all given you the same advice and that advice still stands. Can we agree that if you have any further questions that you contact me directly as I am dealing with this matter.	Consider action under unacceptable user policy	Make a note on the CMS. Add an alert on CMS that you will be case contact. Discuss with Line Manager

9
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

Going round in circles

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
<p>We are now going round in circles and this is not taking things forward.</p> <p>Can I please ask some questions to offer you the best advice?</p> <p>Can I ask you to put this in writing, please consider summarising what you would like us to consider using numbering or bullet points.</p> <p>I want to focus now on what steps you need to take to progress your complaint.</p>	<p>If conversation moves on as a result of intervention agree the next action you or caller can take to progress the case.</p>	Record on CMS
<p>If not getting anywhere:</p> <p>I am sorry, I feel that we are now repeating ourselves which is not helpful. I do not wish to take up any more of</p>	<p>End the call following the action agreed.</p> <p>If caller does not respond to this advice consider</p>	Record on CMS Note if unacceptable user action taken

10
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

<p>your time and thank you for talking to me today.</p> <p>I need to now go and...note what we have agreed/send you information/make enquiries etc.</p>	<p>warning that you will end the call.</p> <p>Consider if Unacceptable user action should begin.</p> <p>Talk to your Line Manager</p>	
<p>Alternatively</p> <p>Let me clarify/summarise/recap</p>		

Proactively questioning whether a reasonable adjustment is required

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
<p>You mentioned that you have a health condition, disability,</p> <p>Can I please check with you if there are adjustments that we should consider in communicating with you?</p> <p>We are committed to delivering a service which is accessible to all.</p>	<p>Check we can make the adjustment.</p> <p>Confirm with the caller.</p>	<p>Enter record in Special circumstances on CMS.</p> <p>Tell your line manager.</p>

11
Unacceptable User Advice Cards

Too much irrelevant information

Responses to consider	Action	Internal
I don't require you to give me any further information, I have enough of an understanding of the matter to advise you what you need to do next.	The advice should reflect your understanding of the matter to reassure the caller that you were listening.	Record on CMS Talk to a colleague
I would like to ask you some questions now to allow me to give the best advice that I can – I simply require you to answer - YES or NO.	Consider a follow up letter/email to confirm actions	
I don't want to take any more of your time.		
I don't want you to have to speak to me further about this matter as I can hear it is upsetting you. I have enough information on the situation, thank you.		