

States Complaints Panel

Zero Tolerance Policy

This policy applies to all members of the public who contact the States Complaints Panel, or associated members of staff, via letter, email, telephone or in person.

1. Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We understand that people can become angry when it comes to matters relating to complaints they have made or are considering making in regards to the decisions of Government of Jersey Departments or Ministers. However, if that anger escalates into aggression towards staff, it is unacceptable.

Any aggression or abuse directed towards staff or members of the Panel will not be tolerated.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes:

- Persistent use of language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused – such language may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness.
- The use of swear words in written or verbal communication will not be tolerated and these communications will not be responded to.
- The making of inflammatory statements, remarks of a racial or discriminatory nature and unfair or untrue allegations intended to offend, is also abusive behaviour.

2. Unreasonable demands

A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or has the potential to if complied with) impact excessively on the work of staff. Pursuing a matter in a way that takes up an excessive amount of staff time is also unacceptable, and unfair to others who wish to use the Panel's services.

Some examples include:

- Repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale;
- Insisting on something that is impossible or impracticable;
- Repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns;

- Repeatedly contacting staff members when a response has already been given, should a recipient not like the answer they have received.

3. Unreasonable levels of contact

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to staff by an individual can cause problems. This can occur over a short period, for example, when a large number of calls or emails are received from the same person in one day.

This may also occur when dealing with a complaint, and a person persistently makes long telephone calls to us or inundates us with emails or copies of information that have been already sent or that are irrelevant to the substance of the complaint or enquiry.

The level of contact becomes unacceptable when the amount of time spent talking to an individual on the telephone, or responding to, reviewing and filing emails or written correspondence, impacts on the ability to deal with the matter, or on responsibility for carrying out tasks relating to other matters.

4. How we manage aggressive, abusive and unreasonable behaviour

Any member of staff who directly experiences aggressive or abusive behaviour from an individual may deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation in line with this policy.

Staff will end telephone calls if they consider the caller aggressive, abusive or offensive. Staff have the right to make this decision, to tell the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and to end the call if the behaviour then persists.

If the behaviour is persistent, we will consider whether accepting any further contact from the person is appropriate; any decision in this respect will be communicated to the person in writing and will explain the action being taken and the reasons for such action.

Where someone repeatedly demands a response on an issue for which they have already been given a clear answer, we may refuse to respond to further enquiries from the person. Any decision in this respect will be communicated to the person in writing and will explain the action being taken and the reasons for such action.