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## **ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

Ashford Borough Council is opposed to all forms of unfair discrimination and has policies in place about equal opportunities and harassment. At times, customers (or others) may behave in a way that is at odds with these policies, is unacceptable or unreasonable, may be offensive and may also be aimed at staff personally. These types of behaviour will not be tolerated.

Unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour usually takes the form of spoken or written statements which you find unwanted or offensive about gender, mental state, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age or background. It might, for example, take the form of sexual innuendo, a racist comment aimed at a member of staff or a third party, or dismissive statements about people with disabilities. We do not expect our staff to tolerate such behaviour.

### **Telephone Conversations**

- If you receive a call from a person who is abusive or discriminatory you can terminate the call without prior reference to a Manager.
- Before doing so, tell the person politely but firmly that such remarks are unacceptable and that you will end the call unless they stop.
- If the person persists, tell the caller you are ending the call, replace the handset and make a note on the case file. Any witness should contribute a comment. (Remember that in some offices, the telephones have a hands-free facility).
- Alert your Manager as soon as possible.

### **Offensive Remarks Contained in Written Material**

- You should send a written response explaining that the statements are unacceptable and why, asking the person not to repeat them.
- If the person persists, you should consider how to deal with the issue on a case-by-case basis with your Manager.

### **Offensive Remarks Face-to-Face**

- You should end the interview or visit if necessary.
- Before doing so, tell the person politely but firmly that such remarks are unacceptable and that you will end the interview unless they stop.
- If the person persists, tell the person you are ending the interview, ask the person to leave and make a note on the case file. Any witness should contribute a comment.
- Alert your Manager as soon as possible.

### **Support**

We will support staff distressed by abusive behaviour and will find ways to deal with it which are sensitive to their needs, especially where abuse may affect them personally.