

Managed Relationship Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy details Stonewater's commitment to colleagues and customers in dealing with situations where normal processes and service level agreements for contact are no longer sustainable due to one or more of the following (this list is not exhaustive):
- the frequency or nature of contact
 - the complexity of issues
 - unreasonable customer behaviour
 - vulnerability impacting access to services
 - the number of people or departments involved
 - customer concerns, frustrations or dissatisfaction meaning that confidence and trust need to be re-built
- 1.2 Use of this policy does not imply that either party has done any wrong and is not about apportioning blame. It is to enable a sustainable and constructive relationship between parties.
- 1.3 The decision to use this policy should be made with consensus between operational colleagues and the support of line manager(s).
- 1.4 In rare cases, where this approach to agreeing a Managed Relationship does not lead to sustainable and constructive contact, Stonewater may consider use of legal action where it is deemed to be a proportionate step.
- 1.5 All colleagues and contractors will be expected to communicate consistently with customers in a professional, honest and helpful manner in accordance with our ethos and values.

2. Policy background

- 2.1 This policy previously used the language of 'unacceptable behaviour', and while we will not tolerate abuse of our staff, it is recognised that customers often only wish to have their voices heard in a sometimes seemingly complex system.
- 2.2 Use of this policy is not to 'other' the customer, but to help us gain clarity of the issues being faced and agree a way forward. We hope it will help our colleagues access the resources and cross-department support they need in complex cases.
- 2.3 Throughout the implementation of this policy, Stonewater will:
- i. ensure customers' needs and vulnerabilities are not dismissed
 - ii. build trust by having shared expectations with customers for processes and communication
 - iii. support colleagues with training and supervision to appropriately handle complex cases
 - iv. ensure that interventions are reasonable, proportionate and evidence based.

3.0 Regulatory and Legal Considerations

- 3.1 Guidance has been considered from the Housing Ombudsman's 'Our Approach to Unacceptable Behaviour' document.
- 3.2 Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998 we treat all personal and sensitive information we receive as confidential. We will only involve other agencies and share information with the consent of the customer, unless:
- We have a legal obligation to provide the information requested;
 - The information is necessary for the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults.

4.0 Policy Details

- 4.1 Stonewater will ensure that customers are aware of the obligations as set out in their lease/tenancy and will work with customers to signpost for support should they need it. This will promote tenancy sustainment and allow customers to succeed in their homes.
- 4.2 Before considering whether any remedies are required, Stonewater should consider whether discussing the matter with the customer would be appropriate. This may enable the situation to be de-escalated with no further remedy required.
- 4.3 Should a colleague feel it is appropriate to use this policy, in most cases the expectation would be for a meeting or discussion with the customer to agree the specific terms.
- 4.4 There may be occasions where swift enforcement action is required, and a manager may sign off a unilateral Managed Relationship, and as a last resort, legal action.
- 4.5 Where a Managed Relationship on its own does not lead to desired outcomes, we may also consider:
- mediation
 - contact via a third party
 - Legal action (including Civil Injunctions)
- 4.6 Where we believe the safety of staff has become compromised we may also:
- seek emergency legal action (including 'without notice' injunctions)
 - liaise with the Police
- 4.7 We will provide adequate training to colleagues to ensure they are aware of this policy and procedure, providing a consistent approach across the organisation
- 4.8 Cases of unacceptable customer conduct may also involve anti-social behaviour and as such colleagues will follow the ASB policy and procedure.
- 4.9 Stonewater will work with our contractors to ensure all parties adopt the same approach and know the details of any relevant Managed Relationships.

5. Complaints

- 5.1 Where a customer has made a formal complaint or complaints, Stonewater will take care to agree how these will be investigated and communication made in the context of the managed relationship.
- 5.2 Access to our complaints procedure is unaffected. Where a customer has been affected by failures in service across more than one department, and a Managed Relationship is in place, it is hoped that will help achieve satisfactory resolution faster and in a more joined up way. In the rare event that multiple complaints are made that are not founded then this may be addressed specifically within a Managed Relationship.

6. Social Media

- 6.1 A number of customers use social media as their chosen form of communication and at times we are limited in the action we can take to prevent negative or derogatory posts about Stonewater or our colleagues.
- 6.2 Guidance is provided to customers on the Facebook community group and the Customer Hubb. This is available to the customers when they sign up for both platforms, and on our website.
- 6.3 Although Stonewater cannot control content shared by customers, the Social Media team will actively report any inappropriate content to the relevant social media HQ's. Content like this may include colleagues being personally named and trolled, unauthorised videos or photos of colleagues, any threatening comments or hate related content.

7. Quality assurance, appeal and associated policies

- 7.1 All uses of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Managed Relationship Procedure and communicated to the customer.
- 7.2 To provide assurance that the policy and procedure are being applied appropriately, and both customers and Stonewater are being supported and protected, cases will be regularly audited by a nominated senior officer of OLT/SLT level.
- 7.3 Customers will have the right to appeal. The appeal must be received within 2 weeks of the considered by a Senior Officer that has not yet had involvement in the case.
- 7.4 Customers will have the right to appeal the terms of a managed relationship. The appeal must be received within 2 weeks of the Managed Relationship commencing and considered by a Senior Officer that has not yet had involvement in the case.
- 7.5 Associated policies include:
 - Customer Flagging Policy and Procedure
 - Home and Lone Worker procedure

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 8.1 Stonewater will aim to ensure fairness, consistency and proportionality.

- 8.2 Stonewater endeavour to provide services which are accessible to our customers, making reasonable adjustments where required and understanding our customers as individuals with specific needs.
- 8.3 Whilst implementing this policy, Stonewater will be mindful of equality and diversity, with particular regard to protected characteristics as detailed in the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.4 In order to foster an environment of mutual respect, we will always ensure an equality impact assessment is completed for each Managed Relationship. This will take into consideration specific needs or additional support required.
- 8.5 When deciding on any action or sanctions, Stonewater will give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

9.0 Author & Version

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