ACCEPTABLE CLIENT BEHAVIOUR POLICY

1. Introduction

Severn Wye Energy Agency delivers a range of public services. The nature of the services that we provide means that we are in daily contact with members of the public and other organisations. Severn Wye welcomes all kinds of feedback about our services but recognises that a very small number of people can act or behave in a way that can be unacceptable for employees.

The client for the purposes of this document is someone who is in contact with Severn Wye to make use of services that the organisation provides.

Our contract with you, the client

We understand that every situation is different and sometimes stressful. You might feel frustrated - but our staff have the right to do their jobs without being treated badly.

This policy sets out our approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour by service users and members of the public and it is anticipated its application will be minimal. However, Severn Wye has a duty to safeguard its employees from unacceptable behaviour which may otherwise cause it to breach health and safety legislation unless it takes appropriate action.

This Policy outlines what Severn Wye identifies as unacceptable behaviour and what our policy is on next steps.

2. Identifying Unacceptable Behaviour

Employees have the right not to suffer abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour even when a client is under stress.

The organisation has identified the following as examples of unacceptable behaviour:

- Swearing
- Abusive language
- Sexualised language or insinuations
- Discrimination like racism, sexism or homophobia
- Offensive gestures
- Verbal or physical threats
- Bullying or intimidating behaviour
- Being violent or threatening violence
- Acting in a way that is making the advisor uncomfortable even if none of the above apply

We'll also tell you if you're taking up an excessive amount of time as this could stop us helping other people. For example, if you:

- keep demanding things in a short amount of time/timeframe that we as an organisation can't achieve
- ask to speak to a specific member of staff when it's not possible, or contact lots of staff to try and get a different outcome
- demand help for something outside our areas of expertise advice
- keep raising the same issue when we've already helped you or we can't help more
- ask for sensitive or confidential information that we aren't allowed to share with you
- make lots of complaints without giving us the chance to resolve them, or making an unreasonable number of data protection rights requests

Severn Wye can view these and other types of behaviour to be unacceptable if it impacts significantly upon workloads and/or the capacity to deliver an effective service, for example, taking an excessive amount of employees' time to the disadvantage of other clients.

3. What we'll do if we believe that your behaviour is unacceptable

We'll give you a chance to change your behaviour, but if the behaviour continues we might decide to:

- end the conversation
- limit how much time we spend on the phone with you and by email
- not reply to all your communications
- only help you with certain issues

In very serious situations we might:

- stop offering any services to you
- call the police

If we find your behaviour or actions unacceptable we will inform you of this, giving you a chance to change your behaviour. If you do not change your behaviour we have the right to end our contact with you.

If there is a concern about your behaviour that may fall within the scope of this policy, a Severn Wye manager will, in the first instance, ask you in writing to modify your behaviour (including a copy of this policy).

We'll always try to tell you why we've stopped helping you.

If your behaviour continues to cause concern after being given an initial warning then the organisation will look to restrict communication. If fraudulent activity is suspected we reserve the right to make further investigations.

Where your behaviour is so extreme that it poses an immediate threat to the health, safety or wellbeing of staff or other service users, you may not receive prior warning that access to services may be restricted.

Severn Wye will however provide written confirmation of its decision to you, where possible. Severn Wye may apply a "warning flag" on your electronic record to classify them as using unacceptable behaviour and/or block or redirect your telephone number or email address. If we decide to stop helping you it means you can't access Severn Wye services but at our discretion we can signpost you to funders who may be able to help directly.

If you think our decision is unfair you can make a formal complaint through the following email: complaints@severnwye.org.uk.

4. Further information

If you require further information please email mailto:info@severnwye.org.uk

This policy was updated on 14th November 2023.

References:

How we handle unacceptable behaviour - Citizens Advice

https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/18823/unacceptable-customer-behaviour-policy.pdf

https://copeland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s5141/Eden%20DC%20Unacceptable%20Behaviour%20Policy.pdf