



Mansfield
District Council

Mansfield District Council

Unreasonable Behaviour Policy 2025 – 2027

Current Document Status

Version	V2
Approval by	Monitoring Officer (MO)
Date	14 March 2025
Author	Communications and Customer Experience Manager (CCEM)
Date of review	31 March 2027

Version History

Date	Version	Author/Editor	Comment
7 March 2025	1	CCEM	Daft policy sent to MO for comment
12 March 2025	2	CCEM	Changes made to create policy and implementation note
12 March 2025	2	CCEM	Issued to MO
14 March 2025	3	CCEM	Issued to ADs
10 April 2025	3	CCEM	Approval to publish

MANSFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY 2025

Section	Title	Page
1	Introduction	4
2	Who this policy applies to	4
3	When the policy can be invoked	4
4	Definitions of Unreasonable Behaviour	4
4.1	Examples of Unreasonable Behaviour	5
5	Examples of Unreasonable Communication	6
6	Options for handling unreasonable behaviour and communication	7
7	Process and implementation	7
8	Appeals and Reviews	8
9	Referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	8
10	Policy Implementation Note to Staff	8

1. Introduction

Mansfield District Council is committed to handling all enquiries and complaints fairly. However, in some cases, individuals' behaviour may hinder this process or create an unnecessary strain on resources. This policy sets out how the council manages unreasonable behaviour while ensuring the safety of staff and councillors.

This policy aligns with the Council's Violence at Work Policy, which ensures a safe working environment for employees. Violent behaviour, threats, or attacks will be recorded on the Employee Protection Register and managed under the council's risk management system. The policy may also support actions required under the Violence at Work Policy, such as limiting access to council services or employee contact.

2. Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to all members of the public who interact with the council.

3. When the Policy May Be Invoked

The policy will not be invoked due to a single episode of unreasonable behaviour. A decision to apply restrictions must be based on clear and documented evidence of ongoing unreasonable, unacceptable, or vexatious behaviour over time.

Council staff should refer to the accompanying guidance note for further details on how to gather evidence and implement the policy.

4. Definitions of Unreasonable Behaviour

Mansfield District Council adopts the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's (LGO) definition of "unreasonable complainant behaviour" and "unreasonable persistent complaints."

Unreasonable behaviour includes conduct that hinders the council's ability to respond effectively to complaints or enquiries. It can involve the manner or frequency of communication, the nature of requests, or actions towards staff or councillors.

4.1 Examples of Unreasonable Behaviour

Unreasonable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Baseless and persistent Complaints – Making complaints with no factual basis or solely to cause inconvenience.
- Refusal to Provide Information – Persistently failing to provide requested details necessary to progress.
- Refusing to accept the outcome of a complaint

- Repeatedly attend council premises to harass, abuse, intimidate staff or disrupt their working environment
- Non-Cooperation – Demanding resolutions while refusing to engage in the complaints process or investigation or deny allegations made in previous stages of the investigation.
- Ignoring Policy Scope – Persisting in complaints that fall outside the council's remit.
- Persistent and Unreasonable Demands – Expecting actions outside of standard procedures or council capabilities, including requesting responses within unreasonable timescales.
- Recording Without Consent – Recording meetings or conversations with council staff or councillors without prior warning or consent.
- Multiple Contact Attempts – Contacting multiple members of staff, councillors, or third parties to escalate issues unnecessarily.
- Personal Attacks – Making unfounded complaints about staff or attempting to have them dismissed.
- Excessive Contact – Sending excessive correspondence despite being advised against it.
- Pursuit of Unachievable Outcomes – Seeking outcomes that are legally or practically impossible.
- Aggressive and Threatening Behaviour – Intimidating, harassing, or using abusive language towards council representatives, including but not limited to:
 - I. Threats and intimidation
 - II. Inappropriate or offensive language
 - III. Verbal abuse
 - IV. Racist, sexist, or derogatory remarks
 - V. Rudeness or inflammatory statements
 - VI. Raising unsubstantiated allegations

The council has a zero-tolerance position on violence and threats against its staff and councillors. Such behaviour will always be reported to the police.

5. Examples of unreasonable communication

Communication with the council may be considered unreasonable when individuals are:

- Making repeated and unnecessary contact during the investigation of a complaint or enquiry. This includes making several approaches about the same matter without raising any new issues.
- Repeated Complaints – Raising the same issue repeatedly with minor variations or refusing to accept outcomes.
- Raising New Issues – Bringing up unrelated matters during an investigation.
- Changing the Complaint – Frequently altering the nature of the complaint without justification.
- Refusing to Accept a Decision – Persisting even when explanations have been provided.
- Continuing to Pursue Determined Complaints – Raising the same complaint despite a resolution.
- Bringing Unfounded or New Complaints – Presenting new complaints arising from the same set of facts.
- Continuing to Pursue Complaints with No Substance – Repeatedly raising complaints that lack merit.

The above list is not exhaustive, and the council reserve the right to add to the above list.

We also consider persistent and vexatious contact with the council as unreasonable, in line with the LGO's definition of "unreasonable complainant behaviour" and "unreasonable persistent complaints."

6. Options for Managing Unreasonable Behaviour and Communications

When an individual is deemed to be acting unreasonably, the council may take the following actions:

- Restricting Contact Methods – Limiting communication to written correspondence only.
- Limiting Contact Frequency – Setting restrictions on how often the individual can contact the council (e.g., once per week).
- Single Point of Contact (SPOC) – Designating a single officer for all future correspondence.
- Restricting In-Person Visits – Requiring meetings to be prearranged or attended with a witness.
- Ceasing Further Correspondence – Declining to respond to repeated complaints that have already been addressed.
- Blocking Emails – If the volume and frequency of emails prevent the council from conducting its business effectively.
- Referral to Authorities – Reporting threats, harassment, or violent behaviour to legal authorities.

Any restriction applied must be proportionate and must not interfere with an individual's statutory rights (e.g., attending public council meetings). However, options may be available, such as taking out an injunction or involving the police. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with legal services as necessary.

7. Unreasonable Behaviour Policy Process and Implementation

When unreasonable contact or behaviour has been identified, the unacceptable behaviour should be explained to the complainant, in a format that is appropriate to the requirements of the customer.

An explanation of the action the council is to take should also be given and the complainant advised of the content of this policy.

The individual will be informed in writing of:

- The behaviour considered unreasonable.
- The reasons for the decision.
- Any restrictions being imposed.
- The duration of the restrictions.
- The right to appeal within 10 days.

Details of the restriction will be recorded in the Employee Protection Register.

8. Appeals and Reviews

Individuals can appeal restrictions within 10 working days of being notified. Appeals must be made in writing and will be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer.

All restrictions will be subject to review at least every six months, with service areas reviewing sooner if necessary. The Monitoring Officer will ensure a review takes place before any restriction expires and inform the individual of the outcome.

9. Referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If an individual believes the council is acting unfairly in imposing restrictions, they may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) for an independent review.

10. Policy Implementation Note for Staff

A separate internal document will outline the detailed process for evidence collection, decision-making, and procedural steps for staff handling cases under this policy.