



Customer conduct policy

Policy no. POL126



Purpose

We know how frustrating it can be when you feel let down or that you're not being listened to. We understand that this is sometimes the case for our customers, and we respect and support their need to express this. However, we expect customers to act with courtesy and respect when interacting with our staff. Our zero-compromise approach to Health and Safety includes zero-tolerance on violence, abuse and discriminatory behaviour directed at our staff or those working on our behalf.

This policy outlines how we recognise when a customer's behaviour becomes unacceptable and gives us guidance on how we should act in these circumstances.

Following the policy protects our staff from harm in the workplace and makes sure we're consistent and fair to all customers when we respond to instances of abusive behaviour.

Key principles

We won't tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour directed towards our staff during any form of interaction, i.e. face to face, online, over the phone, or any other form of communication. This includes:

- Any form of physical, hostile or abusive behaviour
- Use of inappropriate language, verbal or written, which may cause a member of staff to feel scared, abused, intimidated, threatened or offended. This could be:
 - creating a hostile, degrading or offensive interaction
 - using a bullying tone or language
 - inappropriate religious, cultural or racial comments or insults; including racial stereotypes and judgements based on accent, such as asking to speak to someone who is 'from this country'
 - bi-phobic, homophobic or transphobic comments
 - sexist or other derogatory remarks
 - discrimination against any other protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010

The policy in action

Experienced employees know how to handle contact with angry customers, giving them the time and opportunity to share any frustrations at the company's processes and operations and meeting anger with understanding and patience. But if the anger is actively directed at our staff and language becomes abusive and/or personal, the situation becomes unacceptable.

Our staff will politely and respectfully ask customers to stop using this kind of language or behaving in this way, in line with this customer conduct policy. If the behaviour then continues, our staff can stop the conversation or remove themselves from the situation. New legislation now provides greater protection to all customer-facing staff. It will mean harsher sentencing for those who assault public-facing workers. We want our staff to serve all our customers in the knowledge they are fully protected against abusive, threatening or violent behaviour. The vast majority of our customers are extremely respectful of our hard-working staff; we hope that this change in law will deter that small minority of customers from acting inappropriately.

We may refer specific cases or repeat offenders to the authorities, if appropriate. Any physical attack or violence will not be tolerated and will always be reported.

Who this applies to

This policy applies to all Thames Water customers, any members of the public who engage with our staff and those external parties or contractors working on our behalf.

Responsibilities

- All customers are responsible for treating our staff with respect and courtesy.
- All colleagues are responsible for handling and reporting unacceptable customer behaviour in line with this policy.
- Management is responsible for making sure this policy is applied fairly and consistently.

When to speak up

If you're concerned about any issues relating to this policy, you can take any of the following actions:



Useful references

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Health and Safety Policy Statement](#)
- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act)
- [Honest and Ethical Behaviour Policy](#) (POL028)

Warren Buckley, Retail Director, Approval Date 4 October 2022