

POLICY ON UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT COMPLAINANTS

Generally

The Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who make them. As part of this service the Council does not normally limit the contact complainants have with it.

Unreasonably persistent complainants

However there are a small number of complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with the Council's offices, hinder consideration of their, or other people's complaints or the efficient conduct of Council business. Such complainants are referred to as 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and, exceptionally, action will be taken to limit their contact with the Council.

Decision to restrict access

The decision to restrict access will be taken at Director level or above and will follow a prior warning to the complainant.

Restrictions which may be imposed

Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options most likely to be considered are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only);
- requiring contact to take place with a named officer;
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times; and/or
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future contacts with the Council.

Notification in writing

In all cases complainants will be informed in writing as to why the Council has decided to treat them as an unreasonably persistent complainant, why it is believed that their behaviour falls into that category, the action being taken and the duration of that action. The complainant will also be told how he or she can challenge the decision if they disagree with it. Ordinarily, the relevant local ward councillor, as the Member of the Council responsible for the part of the district in which the complainant resides, will be notified of any decision taken under this policy. If the Council decides to carry on treating someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant and their complaint is still being investigated six months later, a review will be carried out to decide if restrictions will continue.

Terminating contact with the complainant

Where a complainant whose case is closed persists in communicating with the Council about it, the Council may decide to terminate contact with that complainant. In such cases all correspondence from that complainant will be read but, unless there is fresh evidence which affects the decision on the complaint, the Council will, on the first occasion, simply acknowledge its receipt and any subsequent communications will be placed on the file without acknowledgement.

New complaints

New complaints from people who have come under the unreasonably persistent complainants policy will be treated on their merits.