



MANAGING UNREASONABLE EXTERNAL CONTACTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Policy applies to all employees of the VTW whether employed on a full, part-time or temporary basis and members of the Tribunal.
- 1.2 The following guidelines have been produced to assist employees of the Valuation Tribunal for Wales (VTW) in managing the very small number of contacts where the actions or behaviour of a contactor are abusive or unreasonable and can challenge our ability to deliver an effective service to all our other users.

2. AIMS

- 2.1 The main aim of this policy is to ensure equity and fairness, improve efficiency and manage risks to the health and safety of staff. It applies to all areas of work where staff have contact from any external person by phone or in writing (this includes electronic communication).
- 2.2 All people contacting us will be treated with fairness and respect even if we perceive actions or behaviour to be challenging.
- 2.3 The VTW will always;
 - in the case of a complaint, separate the way it may need to manage contact with a complainant from the way it deals with their complaint.
 - consider any reasonable adjustments necessary to ensure compliance with equality legislation.

3. AGGRESSIVE, ABUSIVE OR OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR

- 3.1 Staff of the VTW have the right to work in an environment free from aggressive, abusive or offensive language or behaviour at all times.
- 3.2 The VTW considers such behaviour to include;
 - Swearing or making derogatory remarks;
 - Inappropriate cultural, racial, political or religious references;
 - Rudeness or shouting;
 - Threatening behaviour; and
 - Emotional abuse or manipulative behaviour.

3.3 Threats of physical violence or harassment to any member of staff are unacceptable and will be reported to the police.

4. UNREASONABLE DEMANDS OR PERSISTENCE

4.1 The VTW is committed to providing a proportionate amount of time and resources to each case when dealing with its appeal workload. Unreasonable demands and persistence may prevent staff from fulfilling this commitment.

4.2 The VTW considers unreasonable behaviour to include:

- Excessive telephone calls, emails or letters;
- Sending duplicate correspondence;
- Persistent refusal to accept a decision or explanation;
- Continuing to contact the VTW after a decision, about the same or similar matters, when all potential VTW remedies have been exhausted;
- Demanding responses within an unreasonable time scale;
- Seeking information not relevant to the complaint;
- Refusing to cooperate in accordance with the VTW's Complaint Policy and Procedures;
- Raising matters that are immaterial to the case or complaint, or repeatedly changing the substance of the contact or complaint; and
- Repeatedly contacting, or insisting on speak to, a member of staff who is not directly dealing with the case or complaint.

5. TERMINATING A TELEPHONE CALL

5.1 VTW staff may terminate a call if subjected to the behaviours outlined in paragraphs 3 and 4 above. Before taking this action, staff will warn the caller that their conduct is of concern, in order to allow the person to moderate their behaviour. If the behaviour persists, no further warning will be given but the call will be terminated.

5.2 The member of staff who terminates the call will report their action to their Line Manager (LM).

5.3 Following a terminated call, if the person concerned makes further contact and the behaviour remains the same, the LM may restrict telephone contact for one day. This decision will be recorded and communicated to all staff taking frontline calls.

5.4 If the person contacting us does not modify their behaviour, further consideration will be given to formally managing contact between that person and the VTW.

6. CONSIDERING WHEN TO MANAGE CONTACT

6.1 In the very small number of cases where the actions or behaviour of a person contacting us challenges our ability to deliver an effective service, as set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, the member of staff should report their concerns to their LM. The LM will decide whether it is necessary to issue a warning letter, enclosing a copy of this policy if necessary. If the behaviour is sufficiently serious, or a warning has already been issued, a formal decision will be taken to manage the contacting individual.

7. FORMAL DECISION TO MANAGE A CONTACTING INDIVIDUAL

7.1 The VTW may (amongst other considerations) manage the contact by:

- Limiting contact to one medium, e.g. the complainant may be limited to contacting VTW by email or letter only;
- Limiting telephone calls to specific days and/or times;
- Arranging for a single point of contact for all future correspondence;
- Blocking telephone calls and/or emails being received;
- Advising the complainant that their correspondence will be read to ensure no new issues are raised but will then be filed or destroyed without acknowledgement.

7.2 Decisions on how to formally manage contact will be made by a member of the executive team, after discussion with the LM concerned, on a case by case basis.

7.3 The Executive Manager (EM) will record their decision and any actions to be taken in the VTW *Managing Contacts* register.

7.4 The EM will notify, in writing, the individual of the decision to manage their contact, the reasons why this decision has been taken, how long any restriction will be in place, when it will be reviewed and the right to appeal the decision. A copy of this policy will be enclosed with the decision letter.

8. REVIEWING DECISIONS

8.1 The decision to manage contact with the individual will be reviewed by an Executive Manager at the time specified in the decision letter, which will be no more than six months after the date the decision was taken and any alterations to the restriction will be noted in the VTW *Managing Contacts* register.

9. APPEALING A DECISION

- 9.1 The individual can, within 20 working days of receiving the decision letter, appeal the Executive Manager's decision to manage the individual's contact with the tribunal. They must do so by writing to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the VTW, who will consider the appeal and advise the individual in writing whether the decision will be set aside, varied, or left in place. The decision by the CEO is the final stage in the procedure.

10. RELATED POLICIES

- 10.1 The following VTW policies are related documents and should be observed in conjunction with this Policy:
- Complaint Policy and Procedure

11. INTERPRETATION

- 11.1 The above provisions aim to provide succinct guidance on how unreasonable external contacts with the VTW will be managed. If, however any of the provisions are unclear, further advice and guidance should be sought from the Chief Executive Officer or in their absence a member of the Executive Management Team.

WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Governing Council of the Valuation Tribunal for Wales has considered the following questions and made the following responses when revising this policy on 26 March 2019:

- A. Does this policy have any positive or adverse effects on — (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Response:	With regard to the Welsh Language this policy has...	
	...positive effects	...adverse effects
(a) Opportunities	No	No
(b) Treatment	No	No

- B. In developing this policy have we considered how we could formulate or change it in such a way that it will have positive effects or increased positive effects on — (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Response:	During development consideration was given to...	
	...positive effects	...increasing positive effects
(a) Opportunities	Yes	Yes
(b) Treatment	Yes	Yes

- C. In developing this policy have we considered how we could formulate or change it in such a way so that the policy decision will not have adverse effects, or so that it has decreased adverse effects, on — (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

Response:	During development consideration was given to...	
	...adverse effects	...decreasing adverse effects
(a) Opportunities	Yes	Yes
(b) Treatment	Yes	Yes