

Policy on Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

Status of Policy

Implemented July 2009

North Yorkshire County Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who make them.

We are accountable for the proper use of public money and must ensure that that money is spent wisely and achieves value for complainants and the wider public.

As part of the complaints service we do not normally limit the contact complainants have with our offices. However, there are a small number of complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with our offices, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints, or delivery of services. We refer to such complainants as 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and, exceptionally, we will take action to limit their contact with our offices.

The decision to restrict access to our offices will be taken at a senior level and will normally follow a warning to the complainant. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options we are most likely to consider are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example, in writing 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 us.

In all cases where we decide to treat someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant we will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour falls into that category, what action we are taking and the duration of that action. We will also tell them how they can appeal against that decision if they disagree with it. If we decide to carry on treating someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant and we are still investigating their complaint six months later, we will carry out a review and decide if restrictions will continue.

Where a complainant whose case is closed persists in communicating with us about it, we may decide to terminate contact with that complainant. In such cases we will read all correspondence from that complainant, but unless there is fresh evidence which affects our decision on the complaint we will simply acknowledge it or place it on the file with no acknowledgement. The complainant will be informed that we will do this.

New complaints from people who have been identified as unreasonably persistent complainants in the past will be treated on their merits.