

ZERO TOLERANCE OF ABUSE POLICY

of

COMMUNITY HOUSING ADVOCACY PROJECT (CHAP)

Scottish Company Limited by Guarantee (Company No. SC213344)

Registered Scottish Charity (Charity No. SCO28100)

Purpose

This policy sets out the commitment of CHAP to provide a safe, respectful and supportive environment for all staff, volunteers and service users.

While CHAP recognises and fully understands that clients seeking debt advice may be experiencing emotional or other stress, financial hardship, anxiety, frustration, crisis situations and feelings of desperation, abusive or threatening behaviour towards our staff or volunteers or other clients will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All service users, clients and members of the public engaging with CHAP
- All forms of communication, including:
 - Face-to-face meetings
 - Telephone calls
 - Emails
 - Letters
 - Social media
 - Video calls
 - Online chat or messaging services

It applies to interactions with all employees, volunteers, trustees and contractors acting on behalf of CHAP.

Our Commitment

CHAP is committed to:

- Treating all service user clients fairly, respectfully and without discrimination
- Providing free, confidential and impartial debt advice
- Supporting staff and volunteers to work in a safe environment free from abuse, harassment or intimidation

We ask all service user clients to treat our staff and volunteers with the same respect.

Unacceptable Behaviour

The following behaviour is considered unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

Verbal Abuse

Including but not limited to:

- Shouting, swearing or aggressive language
- Personal insults or harassment
- Defamatory language
- Online or written abuse
- Threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Discriminatory, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or otherwise hateful language
- Threats of violence or harm
- Intimidation or coercion
- Persistent unreasonable demands
- Abusive emails, letters, social media posts or telephone calls
- Physical aggression, assault or damage to property
- Physical abuse or damage
- Attending our premises while behaving aggressively or under the influence of alcohol or drugs in a manner that presents risk to others
- Recording staff without consent where inappropriate or unlawful

Threatening or Intimidating Behaviour

Including:

- Threats of violence or harm
- Harassment or stalking
- Repeated unwanted contact
- Attempts to intimidate or coerce staff
- Recording staff without consent where inappropriate or unlawful

Physical Abuse or Damage

Including:

- Physical assault or attempted assault
- Damage to property
- Throwing objects
- Blocking exits or invading personal space aggressively

Online or Written Abuse

Including:

- Abusive emails or messages
- Defamatory or threatening social media posts
- Harassment through digital channels

Actions We May Take

Where unacceptable behaviour occurs, CHAP may take one or more of the following actions:

- End a telephone call or meeting immediately
- Require future communication to take place only in writing
- Restrict access to services or premises
- Report incidents to the police
- Issue a first written warning
- Issue a second and final written warning
- Withdraw services where it is safe and appropriate to do so

Any action taken will be proportionate to the seriousness of the behaviour and the need to protect staff and volunteers.

Safeguarding and Vulnerability

CHAP recognises and fully understands that some clients may experience mental ill health, trauma, disability or distress which may affect communication or behaviour.

Where appropriate, we will consider reasonable adjustments and alternative ways to communicate. However, this does not excuse abusive, threatening or violent behaviour, and the safety of our staff and volunteers remains paramount.

Confidentiality and Reporting

All incidents of abuse will be recorded and managed in line with CHAP's confidentiality, safeguarding and health and safety procedures.

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to report all incidents of abuse or threatening behaviour.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Prevention and Detection of Abuse Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy and Complaint Procedures
- Risk-taking Policy

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or operational needs.