



Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy

Policy Statement Owner:

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1. Aim

- 1.1 At Watkins Energy we are committed to putting our customers first and believe that all our customers have a right to be heard, understood and respected.
- 1.2 We also believe that our staff, and any contractors and/or other parties working on our behalf, have the right to work in a safe environment, free from any abuse or harm caused by others.
- 1.3 We understand that in times of trouble or distress people may act out of character and may become angry when they feel that matters which they feel strongly about are not being dealt with as they wish. If that anger escalates into aggression or abuse towards our staff, or any contractor or other party acting on our behalf, or unreasonable demands or levels of contact, we consider that unacceptable.
- 1.4 This policy sets out what we consider to be unacceptable customer behaviour and our approach to dealing with such behaviour, making sure that we do so in a professional, consistent, and fair manner.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to customers who own or occupy homes or properties connected to any of the heat networks that we manage and provide heat related services to, including metering and billing and planned, preventative and reactive maintenance.
- 2.2 The policy applies to all staff and any contractors or others providing services on our behalf.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 We are committed to:
 - Providing a professional and fair service to all our customers. Our Customer Services Charter and Guaranteed Service Standards set out what customers can expect from us. In return we ask that customers always treat our staff, and any contractors or other parties acting on our behalf, with courtesy and respect.

- Providing a safe and supportive working environment, taking the necessary steps to protect our staff, and any contractors or other parties acting on our behalf, from unacceptable customer behaviour.
- Providing all customer facing staff with training and support to deal with difficult situations.
- Implementing a zero tolerance policy towards threatening, abusive and/or violent behaviour from customers.
- Supporting and empowering staff, and contractors or other parties acting on our behalf, to end calls and appointments when they feel the customers behaviour is unacceptable.
- Fully investigating and keeping accurate records of any incidents of unacceptable customer behaviour and action taken.

4. What Do We Consider to be Unacceptable Behaviour?

4.1 We consider unacceptable behaviour to be behaviour or language (written, verbal or online) that we consider may cause staff to feel intimidated, afraid, offended, threatened, or abused.

4.2 Examples of this include (but are not limited to):

- Communication that we consider to be unreasonably demanding, or unreasonably persistent in its frequency, type and nature. By this we mean face to face, telephone, online or through social media. Communication becomes unacceptable when it starts to impact excessively on the work of our staff, or when dealing with the matter takes up an excessive amount of time, and in so doing disadvantages other customers.
- Inflammatory/derogatory statements, remarks of a sexual, racial, xenophobic, homophobic, or other discriminatory nature and unsubstantiated allegations.

- Violent behaviour - physical contact made in an aggressive or threatening manner. This includes pushing; jostling; kicking; punching; physical restraint; sexual assault; spitting and use of weapons.
- Threatening behaviour - Words or actions that cause a person to be concerned for their safety, the safety of colleagues, or the safety of their property. This includes rudeness, visual threats or gestures; aggressive stance; sexually explicit or threatening language or body language; abusive phone calls; online bullying, use of aggressive dogs and obstruction or aggressive use of vehicles.
- Abusive behaviour - Words or actions that cause a person to feel harassed, intimidated or distressed. This includes shouting, offensive gestures; aggressive stance; abusive, provocative or obscene language and inappropriate use of social media.

- Wilful damage to property, which can include damage to property belonging to Watkins Energy, our staff and/or any contractors or other parties acting on our behalf. This includes buildings; fixtures; fittings; equipment and vehicles.
- Stalking or other forms of harassment.
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media, websites, newspapers, etc.

5. What Action Will We take?

5.1 Our position on unacceptable behaviour is very simple – zero tolerance. We will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour inside our organisation and so we will not tolerate it against our staff or any contractor or other party acting on our behalf.

5.2 If a customer's behaviour is unacceptable we will take the following steps.

5.3 Step 1: Identify

5.3.1 Where customer behaviour is recognised as unacceptable, we will first ask the customer to modify their behaviour and explain why. If the behaviour continues our employees are advised to remove themselves politely, professionally, and safely from the situation by ending the call or appointment.

5.4 Step 2: Report

5.4.1 The employee will inform their line manager or a Director about the situation and the incident will be recorded.

5.5 Step 3: Review

5.5.1 The line manager or Director will investigate the incident and decide what action to take. Where relevant we will keep the customer informed.

5.5.2 In some instances we may need to escalate to the Police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

5.6 Step 4: Update

5.6.1 Following a review of the customers behaviour, the customer will be told in writing the outcome of the review and the reason behind any decisions which have been made.

5.6.2 The customers will be informed of what the alternative arrangements will be and the length of time that these restrictions will be in place.

5.7 There may be rare occasions when the staff member, contractor or other party acting on our behalf, is unable to give a warning to the customer that the call will be ended if the customer's unacceptable behaviour/language continues. In

such circumstance the individual involved is empowered to end the call immediately.

5.8 Calls may also be ended if a customer refuses to conclude the conversation and persists in staying on the line.

6. Unreasonable Demands and/or Unreasonable Levels of Contact

6.1 Where a customer is unreasonably demanding we may decide to:

- Limit contact to telephone calls from the customer at set times on set days.
- Restrict contact to a nominated member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence.
- See/speak to the customer by appointment only.
- Restrict contact to written correspondence only.
- Refuse to deal with further correspondence and return any documents.
- Advise the customer that further irrelevant documentation will be destroyed.
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances.

7. How Customers Can Appeal

- 7.1 If you disagree with our final decision you are entitled to make a formal complaint. If you wish to make a complaint please refer to our Customer Complaints Policy -

www.watkinsenergy.co.uk/documents/WatkinsEnergyCustomerComplaintsPolicy.pdf

8. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

- 8.1 As a minimum, this policy will be reviewed once a year or in response to changes to regulation directly affecting the services we provide.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 9.1 We are committed to valuing and promoting equality and diversity and will treat all customers fairly and with respect.

10. Associated Documents

- Our Customer Services Charter
- Guaranteed Service Standards and Guaranteed Service Payments
- Customer Complaints Policy
- Customer Leaflet: How to make a complaint
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

11. Contacting Us

Whatever you need, we're here to help.

Get in touch today to talk to one of our friendly Customer Care Team.

- **Telephone:**

0330 324 0018 (local rates apply)

Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm.

- **Email:**

help@watkinsenergy.co.uk

- **In writing:**

Watkins House, Leigh Road

Haine Business Park

Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 5EU

For more information about our services check out our website which has lots of useful information, tips and answers to frequently asked questions:

www.watkinsenergy.co.uk