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# **How We Handle Unacceptable Behaviour**

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# **Introduction** We are a team of disabled welfare rights advisers assisting clients with disability benefits, including Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in the UK, and Disability Allowance and Illness Benefit in Ireland, as well as Blue Badge and Access to Work applications. We understand that many of our clients experience distressing situations and significant barriers when navigating the benefits system. We are committed to providing support in a way that is respectful, accessible, and effective for all parties involved.

# As disabled people ourselves, we also have access needs and varying ways in which we work. We value open, clear, and respectful communication, and this policy outlines how we handle unacceptable behaviour while ensuring the best possible outcomes for everyone involved.

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# **Our Approach to Communication** Since we work remotely, our communication primarily takes place via email and videocalls. We strive to accommodate different communication needs and preferences where possible. However, to maintain a safe and effective working environment, we ask all clients to engage with us in a way that is constructive and considerate.

# We are a disabled-led organisation and therefore there will be times where we have flare-ups, are unwell and days that we are unable to answer queries or respond to communication. We have the right to do our jobs without being treated unfairly. We are human with feelings, too!

# **What We Consider Unacceptable Behaviour** We recognise that distress and frustration are common in benefit-related matters, and we do not penalise clients for expressing emotions. However, certain behaviours can impact our ability to provide support and create an unsafe or unmanageable working environment. We work closely with a team of BSL/English interpreters as we are deaf advisers. We do not accept inappropriate behaviour towards us, our team of interpreters, or our support workers.

# Unacceptable behaviours include but are not limited to:

# **Abusive or Aggressive Language**

# Swearing directed at us or others

# Threats, intimidation, or personal attacks

# Hate speech, discrimination, or derogatory comments based on disability, gender, race, sexuality, or any other protected characteristic.

# **Excessive Demands on Our Time**

# Sending repeated messages demanding immediate responses outside of agreed timeframes.

# Insisting on support outside of our working hours or beyond the agreed scope of our service.

# Ignoring our boundaries regarding response times and communication methods.

# Sudden last-minute changes to deadlines (such as feedback provision) without prior discussion.

# **Disrespecting Our Access Needs**

# Requests for sessions without an interpreter present (e.g. ' I just need to ask...').

# Addressing the interpreter instead of us.

# Insisting that we work in a way that is inaccessible to us.

# Dismissing or ignoring our stated limitations or working preferences

# Pressuring us to provide services in ways that conflict with our own disabilities or health needs.

# **Disruptive or Inappropriate Behaviour in Videocalls**

# Disregarding the allotted time limit for a client session (typically 1 hour).

# Shouting, interrupting, or refusing to allow constructive discussion.

# Using video or chat functions in a way that causes distress or discomfort.

# Recording or sharing calls without consent.

# **Unacceptable Behaviour Over Email**

# Sending aggressive, demanding, or excessive follow-up emails without allowing reasonable time for a response.

# Using capital letters or excessive punctuation to convey hostility.

# Making inappropriate or accusatory remarks in written communication.

# Sending emails at unreasonable hours and expecting an immediate reply.

# **Unreasonable Expectations & Emergencies**

# Expecting responses or actions outside of our working hours without prior agreement.

# Failing to distinguish between urgent and non-urgent requests and demanding immediate action.

# Not respecting our reasonable response time (e.g., within 2-3 working days).

# **Social Media & Other Informal Channels**

# Sending support requests via social media instead of agreed communication channels.

# Publicly posting complaints or criticisms instead of raising concerns directly through appropriate channels.

# Expecting immediate responses through informal platforms.

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# **How We Handle Unacceptable Behaviour** Our approach is to handle these situations with care and understanding, while also protecting our well-being. If unacceptable behaviour occurs, we will take the following steps:

# **First Reminder**

# We will remind the client of our policy and explain how the behaviour affects our ability to support them.

# We may suggest alternative ways to communicate if needed.

# **Second Reminder & Temporary Pause**

# If the behaviour continues, we may temporarily pause our support while discussing how best to move forward.

# We will clearly outline any necessary changes to communication methods.

# **Ending Support as a Last Resort**

# If the behaviour persists despite warnings, we may be unable to continue providing assistance.

# We will provide information on alternative sources of support and refer when possible.

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# **Acknowledging Neurodivergent Communication** We understand that many of our clients are autistic or otherwise neurodivergent, which can influence communication styles, emotional regulation, and expression. Our aim is not to penalise natural communication differences but to ensure that interactions remain manageable for both parties. If a client struggles with our communication guidelines due to disability-related reasons, we encourage an open discussion about how we can best accommodate their needs while also respecting our own.

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# **Feedback & Adjustments** We are open to feedback on this policy and will review it periodically to ensure it remains fair, accessible, and effective for both clients and our team. If you have any concerns or require adjustments, please contact us to discuss reasonable accommodations.

# Thank you for working with us to maintain a supportive and accessible working relationship.