

Public Appointments Service – Unreasonable Conduct Policy

Compliance and Quality Assurance

Most people who complain to PAS act in a calm and reasonable manner. We understand that making a complaint against a public body can be stressful and that, from time to time, this stress may show in how you interact with this office. Our staff members know that managing these interactions is part of their job.

Our staff are not expected to tolerate behaviour that is abusive, offensive, threatening or, due to the frequency of contact, takes up too much time and resources that could be spent in their normal day-to-day work. This Policy is therefore being put in place to set out the process for escalating such behaviour to the senior management team for review. We have a duty of care to our staff to ensure they are supported on the rare occasions customer behaviour escalates to the level of what can reasonably be determined as abusive, offensive, threatening or being a significant drain on resources.

What kind of behaviour is unacceptable?

The following types of behaviour are not acceptable:

- **Unreasonable persistence**
Excessive communications with a Recruitment Unit in relation to any recruitment process. If a decision/complaint has been examined and closed by PAS, the following is unreasonable persistence:
 - insisting the decision/complaint be re-examined by another Reviewer
 - continuing with an argument that has already been looked at
 - challenging minor aspects of the review or seeking vast amounts of additional material to counteract their allegations outside of the FOI process
- **Unreasonable demands**
An unreasonable demand can include looking for a solution that is not realistic or is disproportionate, or telling the PAS how to carry out its functions.

- Unreasonable lack of co-operation
You must present your enquiries/complaint in an organised manner. Unreasonable lack of co-operation can include: not identifying the enquiry/complaint clearly, presenting too much information and expecting a fast response, continuing to provide further information while the query/review is ongoing.
- Unreasonable arguments
You may not make unreasonable arguments. Examples include exaggerating issues, presenting irrelevant or unreasonable arguments, focusing on small details, insisting your version of events is accepted as fact where there is no objective evidence to support it, refusing to consider other versions of events, or being guided by unfounded conspiracy theories or by desire for revenge or a grudge against another person or public body.
- Unreasonable behaviour
Unreasonable behaviour includes threats of violence, abuse of PAS staff or Selection Board Members, and rude or aggressive conduct.

What happens if I behave in this way?

If we consider your behaviour to be unreasonable, we will tell you why and ask you to change it. If it might be useful, we will consider changing our service in a way that may help you avoid unreasonable behaviour in the future.

If the unreasonable behaviour continues, we will take action to put limits on your contact with our office. This decision will only normally be taken after a senior manager or member of the Management Board has reviewed the situation. Restrictions will be appropriate and in line with the nature of the behaviour. The options we are most likely to consider are:

- asking you to contact us by letter only
- asking you to only make contact with a named staff member
- asking you to call by telephone only on certain days and times
- limiting your access to the office
- asking you to enter an agreement about your future conduct
- as a final option, terminating all contact with you if this behaviour shows no signs of stopping (the CEO will make this decision).

In all cases, we will write to tell you why we believe your behaviour is unreasonable and what action we propose to take. If the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the

immediate safety and welfare of PAS staff or others, we will consider other options. These could include, reporting the matter to An Garda Síochána or instigating legal action. In such cases, we may not give you prior warning of that action.

Regardless of your behaviour, our staff will continue to act respectfully and impartially towards you and will consider your complaint on its merits.