LCL Solicitors - Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

The vast majority of clients communicate with us in a polite and courteous manner and are a pleasure to work with. This policy outlines how we manage the small minority of clients whose conduct is unreasonable and unacceptable, as a result of which we are unable to address or act on their matter. Whilst we appreciate that solicitors are commonly instructed during periods of stress and unease, as a firm, we do not believe that this makes it acceptable for a client to behave in an aggressive or abusive manner, to make unreasonable demands and/or expect unreasonable levels of contact, or to behave in a way which may amount to harassment of our staff.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- To define the behaviours that are not acceptable to LCL Solicitors;
- To ensure that the ability of LCL Solicitors and its staff are not adversely affected by those few individuals or behave in an unreasonable manner;
- To ensure our staff have a safe working environment and are not exposed to unnecessary stress; and
- To empower LCL Solicitors to deal confidently and effectively with unreasonable behaviour.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

Aggression or abuse towards any member of our staff will not be tolerated. This includes behaviour or language, whether verbal or written that causes a member of our staff to feel intimidated, threatened or abused. Such language includes, but is not limited to, inflammatory comments, racial or discriminatory remarks and unsubstantiated allegations. Our staff cannot and indeed should not be blamed for anything outside of their control. Even if a client is unhappy about the way their matter has been acted on or addressed by a staff member, we, as a firm, will not be receptive to any form of communication whereby the expression of such dissatisfaction has gone above and beyond to the extent that it thereby amounts to abuse.

Unreasonable demands

A demand is considered unreasonable if complying will result in excessive time and work, and potentially impact on our standards of service.

Whether a demand is considered to be unreasonable will vary depending on the nature of the matter involved. Some examples are:

- Repeatedly requesting responses within an unreasonable timescale;
- Contacting several staff members on the same topic;

- Demanding on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when it is not possible or necessary;
- Insisting that the matter is dealt with in ways that are unprofessional and incompatible with regulatory codes of conduct;
- In the absence of new information and/or evidence, repeatedly posing a question when a response has already been given;
- Refusal to reasonably communicate with a member of our team; and
- Demanding that your legal matter be priorities over that of other clients.

Telephone call

There are several ways in which LCL Solicitors address unacceptable behaviour towards our staff. For instance, if a member of staff experiences unacceptable behaviour or conduct during a telephone call, they may place the caller on hold and arrange for another member of staff to take over, or they may terminate the call entirely. The caller, at an appropriate time, will be informed how and why their behaviour was deemed to be unacceptable. In circumstances where the level of behaviour is deemed to be excessive and/or threatening, we may report such incidents to the police. In all instances of unacceptable communication and/or behaviour, we will contact the offender to explain why their behaviour is considered unacceptable and that the behaviour must change for the retainer or any further discussions to resume. In the event that this behaviour continues from a client, we will consider terminating the retainer forthwith. If we have decided to impose restrictions or cease acting for a client, we will inform the client of the decision in writing and the reasons for the decision, including their right to appeal.

Actions we may take

If we consider a person's action or behaviour to be unacceptable, we may:

- If the individual is our client, to terminate acting for them in the matter;
- Allow contact to a specified staff member only;
- If the individual is a complainant, terminate all contact, and this may mean we discontinue an investigation into the complaint;
- Refer the matter to the police or other relevant authority where a criminal offence has been threatened or committed;
- Take legal action, such as applying for an injunction or court order to prohibit contact/poor behaviour or to otherwise remedy matters.

Social media

We use these social media profiles to signpost to our publications and information, and monitor them to gain valuable insight which informs our work.

We do not tolerate abusive or inappropriate behaviour, communication or language towards the LCL Solicitors or our people on these websites, including posts or comments on our people's social media sites that is related to the work our staff are undertaking at the LCL Solicitors. We also do not tolerate unacceptable or personally abusive comments about LCL Solicitors staff members at a public event, such as a survey or chat stream.

Content that we believe to be abusive or unsuitable is escalated for further action, which may include contacting the author, reporting it to the relevant social media company and/or taking legal action including referral to the police.

In addition, if customers post on social media any information that we would consider to be sensitive information or information otherwise related to our investigation, we reserve the right to dismiss their complaint and/or cease or restrict contact.

Equality & diversity

In some cases, an individual may have mental health issues and/or a disability whereby it is difficult for them to communicate clearly or appropriately. If we are provided with evidence of this, we will consider the individual needs of that person and our staff before deciding how to manage further instructions, including any reasonable adjustments or concessions we may be required to make to continue to act.