Zero Tolerance Policy

Introduction
At Home Improvement Consumer Protection Scheme Ltd (HICS), we believe that no employee, representative, contractor, or person acting on our behalf should be subjected to violent, threatening, abusive, or intimidating behaviour.

We are committed to conducting all our business activities in accordance with the principles of fairness, honesty, integrity, and respect. We expect all individuals and organisations we engage with to uphold these same standards.

HICS operates a zero-tolerance approach towards abusive, threatening, violent, intimidating, or harassing behaviour. While we will seek to de-escalate situations where appropriate, behaviour that places the safety, wellbeing, or dignity of our employees and representatives at risk will not be tolerated and may result in immediate action.

This policy outlines:

- What HICS considers to be unacceptable behaviour.
- The actions we may take to protect our employees and representatives from such behaviour.
- The circumstances in which HICS may restrict or cease communication with an individual and/or business.

Scope
This policy applies to all interactions with HICS employees, representatives, contractors, consultants, and any person authorised to work on behalf of the company.

The policy covers all forms of communication and interaction, including but not limited to:

- Email and other electronic messaging services.
- Telephone calls and voicemail messages.
- Text Messages
- Microsoft Teams
- Online webchat services.
- Social media platforms.
- Letters and written correspondence in any format.
- In-person interactions, including meetings, events, trade shows, site visits, home visits, and visits to HICS offices.
- Any future communication channels or technologies used to interact with HICS.

Unacceptable Behaviour
We understand that people can become angry when they feel that matters they feel strongly about are not being dealt with as they wish. If that anger escalates into aggression towards our staff, whether through verbal, written or online communication, we will find the behaviour unacceptable.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Loud, intrusive conversation or shouting.
- Threatening or abusive language including swearing, offensive remarks or gestures.

- Derogatory, discriminatory or prejudicial behaviour relating to protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- Malicious allegations relating to employees.
- Intimidation, threats or threatening behaviour (e.g., 'I know where you live').
- Harassment, bullying or stalking, including any conduct directed towards an individual that is unwanted and has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity, causing distress, alarm, fear, humiliation, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment. This includes discriminatory behaviour, persistent unwanted contact, threatening or intrusive communications, monitoring, following, or any form of stalking, whether carried out in person, electronically, or through third parties.
- Violence, perceived acts of violence or threats of violence.
- Any explicit or implicit challenge to the safety, well-being, or health of any employee

Unreasonable Behaviour and Demands
Individuals may sometimes make repeated requests, seek information beyond what is reasonably required, or expect services that are outside the scope of those provided by HICS. When such actions become unreasonable and negatively affect our staff, operations, or ability to support others, they will be treated as unacceptable behaviour.

We recognise that some individuals may require additional support or assistance when engaging with our services, and we will make reasonable efforts to accommodate genuine needs. However, it may be considered unreasonable where an individual raises a complaint, concern, or issue but repeatedly refuses to cooperate with reasonable requests for information, clarification, access, or engagement that are necessary for us to investigate or progress the matter.

Examples of behaviour or demands that may be considered unreasonable include, but are not limited to:

- Refusing to accept reasonable explanations about our services, processes, or decisions.
- Refusing to engage with or respond to reasonable requests necessary to progress a complaint, investigation, or enquiry.
- Knowingly making false, malicious, or vexatious allegations about employees or representatives.
- Repeatedly changing the nature of a complaint, concern, or request.
- Secretly recording meetings or conversations.
- Providing false, misleading, or inaccurate information.
- Continuing to pursue issues with HICS that have already been investigated and closed, and an external escalation route signposted
- Repeatedly challenging decisions without providing new evidence.
- Demanding actions that are outside HICS authority or remit.
- Expecting responses within unreasonable timescales
- Attending HICS premises without a prior appointment after being advised of the appropriate contact process.
- Making excessive or repetitive contact about the same matter.

Our Response
First and foremost, reasonable efforts will be made to de-escalate any situation and seek mutual resolution.

Employees who directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from a member of the public, a consumer, or one of our Members are empowered to act in the interests of their own safety and welfare, removing themselves from the situation. Employees will end telephone calls if they consider the caller aggressive, abusive, or offensive. Our staff have the right to make this decision, to tell the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and to end the call. Our calls are recorded, and those recordings will be used in any investigation into inappropriate behaviour.

Where unacceptable behaviour is displayed in any correspondence, including letter, email or via social media, the individual will be told that HICS considers this to be unacceptable behaviour. Any communication that includes physical threats, intimidation, harassment or knowingly false allegations will not be accepted by HICS.

If the unacceptable behaviour continues in future contact, HICS may implement one or more of the measures outlined in the “Responding to Unacceptable Behaviour” section below.

Our field-based team and those representing HICS have the right to carry out any work in a safe environment, free from any form of unacceptable behaviour.

If the staff member or representative of HICS feels unsafe or believes they are at risk, they may:

- End the visit immediately, informing the individual that the visit cannot continue due to their behaviour.

Responding to Unacceptable Behaviour

For any actions or behaviours that HICS deem to be unacceptable we may:

- Limit future contact
- Request that a third-party act on behalf of the individual or business.
- Terminate a Member’s account
- Cancel or refuse to conduct site visits where unacceptable behaviour occurred during a previous interaction.
- Take any other action we believe is appropriate, including ending all contact with the person.
- Where behaviour involves violence, threats of violence, criminal damage, stalking, harassment, hate incidents, or any conduct that creates an immediate risk to the safety of employees or representatives, HICS may immediately terminate the interaction and report the matter to the police or other relevant authorities.

All incidents of unacceptable behaviour, along with any action taken, will be recorded within HICS systems, in accordance with our Data Protection and Retention Policy.

HICS
Consumer Protection

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