

The Village Residence	POLICY NO:	
	Date reviewed	February 2012, 2014, 2017, Sept 2023
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Policy on dealing with an angry resident, visitor or staff member		

Policy on Handling an angry customer. Read in conjunction with Communication Policy and policy on dignity and respect and Guidelines on dealing with a person with dementia

Title of Policy: Policy On Handling an Angry Resident, Relative or staff member,	
Description of the Guideline: This Policy has been developed for the staff in Saint Mary's Hospital only	
Ratification Details:	
Developed by: Drogheda Services for Older People.	Date Developed: Revised February 2012, 2014, 2017, Sept 2023
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Handling an angry customer

1. If a customer is angry, never get angry back. It can only turn an unpleasant little incident into an unpleasant big incident.
2. Do not try logical argument on a customer in a temper: it only adds fuel to the fire.
3. Do not grovel, and do not let an angry customer draw you into accepting his assumption that the organisation is generally inefficient because of his own single unhappy experience.
4. The way to deal with an angry customer is to apologise for the specific inconvenience only, and to take immediate action to put it right.
5. An angry customer means that you still have an opportunity. If the customer storms out of the office, (or slams down the phone), never comes back, and tells all his or her friends/colleagues that it's a dreadful place, that's real damage. But if the customer comes to you in a temper, you have the opportunity to prevent that damage - the real disaster has not happened yet, and if you handle the situation correctly, it won't happen.

Handling a chatter box

1. Never show your boredom or frustration. It will offend other people as well as the chatter box.
2. Never bully or hector any customer, or interrupt rudely, or shut them up by visibly trying to dominate them.
3. When dealing with a compulsive talker, use every conversational gap and lead that you can to guide the conversation towards a satisfactory conclusion.

Handling a rude customer

1. Do not get personally upset by the rudeness of an offensive customer. And do not fuel his/her abuse by making 'value judgements', just stick to facts.
2. Do not be deliberately casual or icily superior to show an offensive customer what you think of him.
3. The way to deal with the offensive customer is to keep cool, keep your professional detachment, stay polite, and keep offering possible solutions in strictly factual terms.

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4. Learn to ignore rudeness. Remember that the offensive customer is offensive to everyone who deals with him/her, not just you. Your job is not to make him/her nice; you simply have to supply him/her with what he/she came for.
5. It is worth recalling the, point that you do not have to make an angry person into a nice person. That's impossible. All you have to do is to get them to go away with whatever it was they came to get.

The very difficult customer

Sometimes you do everything right. You've put all the right techniques into practice, but the person remains difficult. In this case, you should try to bear in mind that

- a. Difficult people are usually difficult for a reason.
- b. People who are scared and anxious are most likely to be difficult - and may remain difficult until their problems are resolved.

Anxious people can become childlike and have "tantrums". Treating them like children will encourage them to act like a child, whilst treating them like responsible adults will encourage them to act rationally

e.g. *"I understand your problem and I assure you I'm trying to help. Please take a seat and I will let you know as soon as I have any information "*.

will be much more calming and effective than:

"I am doing all I can. You will just have to wait your turn ".

If people remain angry, it is often because they think that they are not being listened to.

- Make an effort to look as if you are interested. Put your listening skills into practice.
- Particularly difficult people may be playing to the crowd.
- Try to take noisy and unreasonable people aside - perhaps to a separate room or waiting area.

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- You may gain the sympathy of other people when dealing with difficult customers. These sympathetic people may try to help by arguing with or commenting on the behaviour of the difficult person.
- Whilst this may feel like welcome help, remember that it is easy for the difficult person to feel even more threatened and aggressive.
- A desk can act as a barrier.
- It may help to stand side by side with a difficult customer in a quiet place.

Handling customer complaints

Complaints must be dealt with sympathetically, calmly and promptly. If you follow these standards you will be able to diffuse a customer's feelings of disappointment, anger and embarrassment.

Listen Listen calmly and sympathetically. Do not interrupt the customer. Do not look away or appear distracted.
Give the customer your complete attention.

Apologise Phrase apologies in terms of being sorry that the customer has been disappointed. Do not state or imply that there is a fault or that service has been bad. When you apologise, MEAN IT, after all customers are VIPs

Clarify When appropriate, repeat the facts of the customer's complaint to him/her to ensure you fully understand the problem.

Explain Explanations of what might have happened of why things are done as they are must be clear and favourable to other staff and to the organisation. Do not attach blame, as such, in any explanation

Agree Gain agreement from the customer about the next course of action to be taken, Suggest only action and alternatives which are within the organisation's policy. Where necessary get help from a supervisor.

Take Prompt action, within organisation policy must be taken. This applies as well when that

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Action action is to get a supervisor to assist you. Nothing aggravates customers more than unnecessary delay in resolving their complaint.

Using the telephone

Professionalism on the telephone

Whenever we speak to a stranger on the telephone, our perception of them is determined solely by what we hear through the earpiece. Whenever we talk to customers on the telephone, whether you are the appropriate person or not, their perception of you and the Organisation is determined solely by what they hear.

On the telephone we are limited to using only 30% of our available communication skills which means we must work even harder than in face-to-face communications.

Most frustrating things that can happen to you on the telephone

A recent survey investigated the most frustrating things that can happen to you on the telephone. Leaving aside purely technical problems such as getting a wrong number or bad crossed lines, these were the top frustrating to emerge:

- Not getting a reply fast enough - especially when you know there must be someone there.
- Encountering an incompetent telephonist who puts you through to the wrong extension and/or cuts you off and/or is not sufficiently clued up about who's who and where to reach them.
- Being left hanging or without an explanation of what is happening.
- Not knowing who you are talking to and what authority they have to help you.
- Being called at an inconvenient time by an insensitive caller who assumes that since you have answered the telephone it must be convenient to talk.
- Someone jumping to conclusions about your needs before you have had a chance to explain yourself.
- Being forced to answer a series of closed questions that don't adequately allow you to express your real needs.

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- Someone ringing off leaving things vague, and you uncertain about what will happen next.
- Being greeted by an answering machine instead of a real person.

As you have read through this check-list of telephone frustrations you have probably found many of them familiar and recognised them as being true in your experience. If so, look at them again and ask yourself “how many of” these apply to me?” In other words, how often do you do things that frustrate other people.

The three stages to structure and manage telephone calls

Stage 1 The verbal handshake!

- Answer promptly
- Give name/department
- If you are the caller establish whether it is convenient to proceed.
- Get/use callers name
- Sound friendly and interested (Smile in voice)

Stage 2 Getting / giving the message!

- Listen carefully and sympathetically
- Control the call.
- Use good questioning techniques.
- Speak clearly and distinctly
- Vary voice
- Courteous words and phrases
- Avoid emotive words
- Plain words - no jargon

Stage 3 Offering help!

- Give useful information.
- Say what you are going to do next.
- Summarise.

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- Agree Action.

Effective listening

Why improve your listening?

Effective listening produces results

1. Encouragement to the customer

When the customer can hear that you are listening in a non-threatening he will lose some of his defensiveness. When this happens, he will often try to understand you better and listen more effectively to what you are saying.

2. Possession of all the information

To solve problems and make decisions, it is necessary to obtain as much relevant information as possible. Good listening helps you to get as much information as possible about the customer as he is prepared to tell you. If you learn to listen to the tone of voice, you may also glean information which he/she did not intent to communicate. Careful listening motivates the customer to continue talking.

3. Improved relationships

The customer may have the opportunity to get thoughts, feelings, facts, ideas and so on off his/her chest. As you listen you will in turn understand them better. He/she appreciates your interest and the relationship develops.

4. Resolution to differing points of view

Disagreements can best be solved when you and the customer listen carefully to one another. This does not mean that you will ultimately agree with his/her points of view, or he/she with yours, but you can show that you understand it.

5. Better understanding of the customer

Listening carefully to the customer will give you ideas on how he/she thinks, what he/she feels to be important and why they are saying what they are saying. You are then in a far

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better position to effectively identify and develop his needs and ultimately provide the best service.

Good listening gains

- Information
- Understanding
- Listening in return
- Co-operation