

Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Correspondence or Complaints Policy

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Introduction

1. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) is committed to dealing with all correspondence and complaints in a fair, timely and comprehensive manner. MOPAC will not normally limit contact that individuals have with us. There are however some instances where the behaviour of the individual inhibits the capacity of MOPAC to effectively deal with their concerns. There are also, on occasion, circumstances whereby addressing items of public correspondence can cause significant and disproportionate resourcing issues for MOPAC which are not justified by the nature of the concern.

Scope

2. This policy is intended to deal with those individuals who persist in making unreasonable demands either by way of correspondence or complaints.
3. It **does not cover** dealing with potentially vexatious requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). **Nor does it cover** dealing with individual rights requests submitted under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) which may be determined to be manifestly unfounded or excessive. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidance on these areas can be found on their website:
 - [FOI and vexation requests](#)
 - [UK GDPR and manifestly or unfounded requests](#) and further details of how MOPAC handle such requests are available in our [Individual Rights Request Procedure](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

4. The audience for this policy is MOPAC staff. Guidance for the public will be published in the MOPAC website. Roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy are:
 - **Policy Owners:** Private Office and Secretariat
 - **MOPAC Board:** Responsible for final approval for all new policies and significant policy revisions.

Definitions

5. To enable consistency, this policy follows the same definition of 'vexatious' as the FOIA, that being of a 'manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or improper use of a formal procedure'. The key question under consideration is whether the complaint (or other contact) is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress.
6. **Vexatious, persistent or abusive:** Features of the types of complaint and behaviour that this policy covers can include the following (the list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the person will be considered as being in this category):
 - Persisting in a complaint after being advised that there are insufficient grounds for their complaint or that MOPAC is not the Appropriate Authority.
 - Refusing to co-operate with the complaints process without good reason whilst still wanting their complaint to be resolved. This includes a failure or refusal to specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance, changing the basis of the complaint as inquiries are made and introducing trivial and/or irrelevant new information and expecting this to be considered.
 - Submitting repeat complaints, after the complaint's procedure has been completed, about what are essentially the same issues, with additions/variations which the complainant then insists on being treated as new complaints.
 - Refusing to accept the outcome of the complaint procedure after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.
 - Harassing or verbally abusing or otherwise seeking to intimidate staff dealing with their complaint or correspondence, by using foul or inappropriate language, using offensive and/or racist language and/or making what would appear to be groundless complaints about those members of MOPAC staff.
 - Making an unreasonable number of contacts with us, by any means, in relation to a specific complaint or correspondence including making persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of staff and/or the procedure after the unreasonableness has been explained (such as insistence on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex letters, telephone calls or emails).
 - Recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other person involved.
 - Unreasonably pursuing multiple lines of enquiry regarding the same issue, for instance, persistently pursuing a complaint not only with MOPAC, but at the same time with a Member of Parliament, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), Assembly

Members, the Mayor, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), solicitors or the Home Office.

Alignment with MOPAC Values

7. This policy reflects MOPAC's core values of Leadership, Contribution, Innovation, Cooperation, Honesty and Respect. It does this by committing to dealing with all correspondence and complaints in a fair, transparent and timely manner.

Equality implications

8. MOPAC is committed to dealing with all correspondents and complainants in a fair and impartial manner and in line with our policies and procedures, whilst considering any specific needs of the complainant or correspondent. This should include where relevant, consideration of any access challenges, reasonable adjustments or protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010 and our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Imposing restrictions

9. MOPAC will first ensure that correspondence and/or complaints are being, or have been, investigated properly according to the appropriate procedure. MOPAC recognises that failing to deal with an issue promptly or accurately can lead people to behave in ways we might otherwise characterise as vexatious.
10. Prior to any decision to treat a complaint or item of correspondence as vexatious the relevant member of staff will issue a warning to the complainant. The complainant will be contacted by email or in writing to explain why this behaviour is causing concern and ask them to change this behaviour. They will also be warned of the actions that may be taken if the behaviour does not change.
11. If the behaviour continues, MOPAC will decide whether to limit contact from the individual and to what extent. Any restriction that is imposed on contact with MOPAC will be appropriate and proportionate and may be subject to review the relevant MOPAC staff member. The kinds of restriction which may be imposed are:
 - Limiting contact to a specific mailbox or one named member of staff
 - Refusing to accept telephone calls
 - Only accepting telephone contact through a third party for example via a solicitor/ Assembly Member/ friend acting on their behalf
 - Indicating that correspondence will not be responded to unless substantially new matters are raised (this implies that all incoming correspondence will be read)

- Blocking the individual's email address so that it is not received by MOPAC (this should only be done in extreme cases after all other avenues have been tried).

12. When the decision has been taken to apply this policy, the individual will be written to with reasons for the decision and what action MOPAC is taking. That decision may be amended if the individual continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable.

New complaints or correspondence

13. New issues raised by people who have come under this policy will be treated on their merits. Any imposed restrictions will not apply to new matters although the individual may be warned not to repeat behaviours which led to those restrictions.

Review

14. The status of an individual judged to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious will be reviewed after six months and at the end of every subsequent six months.

Record keeping

15. Adequate records will be retained by the appropriate service manager of the details of the case and the action that has been taken. The Head of Private Office will retain a record of:

- The name and address of each individual who is (or whose complaint / request has been) treated as abusive, vexatious or persistent, manifestly unfounded or excessive
- When the restriction came into force and ends
- What the restrictions are
- When the individual and members of staff were advised.

Safety and welfare of MOPAC staff

16. Where a correspondent's behaviour is sufficiently unreasonable or extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of a member of staff or their family, MOPAC may consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. MOPAC is not required to give the individual prior notification of that action. Similarly, where a complainant behaves in such a way that it appears they may be committing a criminal offence, they will be reported to the Police.

Approved by	MOPAC Board, November 2025
Changes from previous version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redrafted for clarity • Clarified scope of the policy • Clarified definitions of vexatious, persistent or abusive • Clarified record keeping process
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Senior owner	Head of Private Office and Secretariat
Document owner	Secretariat Manager