



SP-UK

SUICIDE PREVENTION UK

Suicide Prevention UK

Managing Abusive Phone Calls Policy

2024

Introduction

At Suicide Prevention UK, we are committed to providing support and understanding to individuals in distress. However, it is also crucial to ensure the safety and well-being of our team members who handle communications, particularly phone calls.

Purpose

Malicious, abusive or threatening calls, whether from people you know or from strangers, are a criminal offence. (Ofcom)

Telephone verbal abuse is not always seen as a serious issue, but any abusive behaviour, including verbal abuse, can have serious long-term effects on the health and well-being of team members.

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on how to handle abusive phone calls, ensuring that all team members are prepared to protect themselves while maintaining professionalism.

This policy also aims to provide information to callers on what we expect from them when calling our Charity and speaking with our team members.

Definition of Abusive Calls

An abusive call may involve:

- Threatening language.
- Use of offensive or derogatory terms.
- Unreasonable demands or excessive aggression.
- Any form of verbal harassment or intimidation.

Scope

This policy applies to all phone calls which are considered abusive by our team members.

Principles

- The vast majority of our team are volunteers who give their time freely to help others.
- All team members are trained in call handling.
- All calls are recorded.
- Verbal abuse is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- We will ban repeated callers who are abusive to our team members.
- We will report threatening calls to the Police.

Procedures for Handling Abusive Calls

1. **Stay Calm and Professional:** Remain calm and do not respond to the caller with anger or aggression. Maintain professionalism to avoid escalating the situation.
2. **Warn the Caller:** Politely but firmly inform the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and that continuing this behaviour will lead to the termination of the call.
3. **Terminate the Call if Necessary:** If the caller continues to be abusive despite a warning, politely end the call, informing them that it is your right to disconnect.
4. **Call the Police (if appropriate):** Ofcom states that:
 - a. If the caller is making direct threats and you believe those threats to be real and immediate, you must call 999 straight away.
 - b. If you believe that the threats made are not immediate, then you should call your local Police station (101 from any landline or mobile phone).
5. **Document the Incident:** Immediately after the call, record the details of the incident, including the time, nature of the abuse, and any identifiable information about the caller on the system. This record will be helpful for any future actions and monitoring.
6. **Seek Support:** Report the incident to a supervisor or manager and seek support.
7. **Review and Follow-Up:** The incident should be reviewed by management to determine if any follow-up actions with the caller are necessary (e.g., blocking them or flagging that the next time they call, they must be warned about their behaviour and face being blocked if it continues) and to ensure that support is provided to the affected team member (e.g., giving them a break to relax, providing reassurance, etc.).

Monitoring and Reviewing

This policy should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains compliant with current legislation, meets best practices, and is not discriminatory.

Feedback from team members will be considered during the review process to make necessary adjustments.

Where evidence or trends indicate that our culture, policy, procedures, or workforce require intervention, an action plan will be initiated.

Policy Date: June 2024

Review Date: June 2025

Dated and Signed by the Chair and Founder of Suicide Prevention UK:
