**Introduction:**

Please be aware that the application process involves a number of questions and discussions which may be uncomfortable or probing in their nature.

It is not the intention to cause any upset during such conversations however this cannot be avoided in all cases. This information is required to gather the relevant details needed to proceed with your application and assist with the possibility of a beneficial outcome.

Should you find the discussions difficult or upsetting please tell the call handler and we will try to adjust our questions while still aiming to gather the required information.

Inverclyde Council also expects staff to be treated politely and with respect. Aggressive or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated and may result in your call being terminated.

**De-Escalation techniques**

When speaking to a caller they may be frustrated or angry during the call without becoming aggressive or abusive. We should attempt de-escalate the situation and assist the applicant to calm down to allow an application to proceed in a more relaxed manner and avoid any further conflict.

* **Explain to the caller that you are trying to help** – they may think that we are being difficult or putting up barriers. Try to explain that you are attempting to gather as much information as possible to give a better chance of a positive outcome.
* **Remain calm and be patient** – do not raise your voice to match the caller. Try and keep level headed and speak to them in a calm and polite manner.
* **Do not take the applicants anger personally** – Callers to our service are facing difficult circumstances and may be worried or frustrated as a result. They are not angry at you but at their situation.
* **Listen to the caller** – they may need to vent and get their frustration out. Avoid interrupting them and allow them to get their point across.
* **Show that you understand** - Repeat the information given back to the caller to show you are listening to them and understand what they have been saying.
* **Show empathy and understanding for their situation** - Try and put yourself in their position and how you might feel and acknowledge that their frustration may be valid. Try to leave your emotions out of the conversation.

**Termination Script**

In certain circumstances where customers are presenting as aggressive and/or abusive we will have no option but to terminate the call. We are required to give the applicant sufficient warning regarding their behaviour in an attempt to allow them to alter this accordingly.

Should you find yourself in a situation where an applicant’s behaviour requires such actions please follow the noted scripting below

**1st warning**
I am trying to help you but I must ask you to stop your aggressive/abusive behaviour to allow me to do so. If you continue in this manner, I will have no option other than to terminate the call.

**2nd warning**

I have asked you to refrain from acting in an aggressive/abusive manner and you have failed to do so. I am once again asking you to stop acting in such a manner and should you continue in this way this call will be terminated.

**Call termination**
You have been given sufficient warning regarding your behaviour and you have failed to address this. I am now terminating the call and your actions will be recorded and may impact any future contact with our service.

**Recording Abusive Behaviour**

Upon terminating a call due to aggressive and/or abusive behaviour or language this should be recorded. This allows sufficient information to be gathered to build a case for utilising the Unacceptable Actions Policy which can restrict the individuals access to the service – This will not be able to bar applicants from contacting our service but can dictate in what manner this contact is made – such as through third parties, via email or online, etc.

This should be done using the ‘ACCIDENT REPORT FORM’ on Icon located on the right hand side of the main screen. Fill this out selecting ‘Verbal abuse from member of the public’ as the incident type and providing a description of the incident/abuse. Should you require assistance in completing this please see the Discretionary Payments Officer for assistance.

Please ensure this is completed as without this being submitted we do not have the required evidence to take any action. Taking the time to complete this will also give you a short break after the conversation to calm yourself before resuming your duties.