

# Unreasonable complainant conduct quick guide



Unreasonable complainant conduct (UCC) is any conduct by a complainant which raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the agency, its staff and other clients. All complainants should be treated with fairness and respect, and **Officers are entitled to be treated with the same level of fairness and respect they afford complainants.**

This quick guide is designed to supplement, rather than replace, relevant standards, policies and legislation governing agency service delivery.

**KEEP GOOD RECORDS**

- Report all UCC incidents
- Make a factual record of interactions and observations
- Handle initial interactions appropriately

It is vital for future safety that **suitably detailed records** are made of all behavioural observations, the actions and strategies engaged by staff, and how the complainant responded.

## Model for identifying and developing strategic response to UCC

Identify warning signs	Assess the reasonableness of the conduct	Categorise the conduct	Consider and select strategies	Implement strategies and monitor
<p><b>Indicators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complainant's history</li> <li>• style/content of communication</li> <li>• interaction with agency</li> <li>• outcomes sought</li> <li>• reactions to advice/outcomes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• likely level of impact/risk on staff, clients, service delivery</li> <li>• merits of issues</li> <li>• assess compatibility with human rights</li> <li>• complainant's circumstances</li> <li>• proportionality</li> <li>• responsiveness</li> <li>• personal boundaries breached</li> <li>• unreasonable under any circumstance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Categories:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persistence</li> <li>• demands</li> <li>• level of cooperation</li> <li>• arguments</li> <li>• behaviour</li> </ul>	<p><b>Considerations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• history of complainant's interactions with agency</li> <li>• previous successful communication techniques</li> <li>• likely level of impact/risk on staff, service delivery</li> <li>• personal thresholds and skill level of the complaint handlers</li> <li>• agency policy, procedures and protocol</li> <li>• jurisdictional issues</li> </ul>	<p><b>Implement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take actions to put strategies into practice</li> <li>• record assessment and strategy</li> <li>• communicate strategy</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complainant's response</li> <li>• staff response - signs of stress</li> <li>• level of success for agency</li> <li>• respond/alter strategy as required</li> </ul>

**NOTE**  
All complaints are to be considered on their merits. UCC does not mean that the issues raised will be invalid or lacking substance.

### Safety reminder

**The physical and emotional safety of all parties is paramount.** Strategies must always be considered in the context of your agency's security protocols and procedures. Consider the differing interpersonal skills, boundaries and thresholds of staff when selecting appropriate strategies. The *Human Rights Act 2019* means that human rights considerations form part of complaints management approaches by agencies.

This quick guide is part of a suite of material supporting *Managing unreasonable complainant conduct*:

- **Strategies and script ideas for managing UCC** - [www.bit.ly/MUCCresource](http://www.bit.ly/MUCCresource)
- **Practical, interactive training** - [www.bit.ly/MUCCtraining](http://www.bit.ly/MUCCtraining)

March 2023 | PUBLIC

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