

TELEPHONE MANNER POLICY

The aim of this policy is to set out guidance on how incoming and outgoing calls should be handled including:

- how to address people
- what to do with persistent callers
- what to do with cold calls
- professional curiosity, where is the line
- who needs to be involved if things go wrong

A General.

Even in this digital age, the telephone is still an important communication device for us as a business.

A telephone call is our clients' and customers' first impression of us.

If you answer the phone in a calm and professional manner, the person will be immediately at ease as you are showing the caller that you respect them and care about what they have to say.

B The scope of this policy

This policy deals with all incoming internal and outgoing calls.

This policy links to all other policies, therefore all calls should never be made/received in a way that breaches any of our other policies, such as equal opportunities, data protection etc.

C Why a policy is needed

This policy aims to protect individuals and ME CIC against abusive behaviour of callers and to ensure all phone calls received are treated to the highest standard.

D How we make and receive calls

1. Answer the call promptly.

This shows a respect for the caller's time and we should answer within 45 seconds.

2. Offer a greeting.

Start with the time of day, followed by the name (Dress for Less) ending with your own name ending with 'how can I help':

"Good morning, Dress for Less, Debbie speaking, how can I help?"

The 'how can I help' immediately tells the caller you are interested in helping them, again showing them respect from the outset.

'How can I help you' as opposed to 'what do you want' is the very essence of customer service.

3. Speak with a smile

As strange as it may sound, your tone often changes noticeably when you smile while speaking. Monitoring your tone throughout a call can be a challenging task. Using this trick can help you maintain a professional, friendly and positive tone throughout the phone-answering process.

4. Be clear

Do not mumble and clearly pronounce everything you say. Speak into the receiver ask for a headset if you prefer.

5. Avoid jargon and slang

In order for callers to understand you, avoid using jargon and always keep your choice of words professional like 'you are welcome', not cheers!

6. Be positive and helpful

The word 'no' is a final negative answer. If you don't know the answer say, 'I am not sure about that, can I come back to you once I have checked'.

We are not saying yes to everything, but we are finding solutions as best we can.

7. Tell someone you are transferring them

Make sure you understand how the phone system works.

Warn people you are going to put them on hold and tell them what you are doing and that there may be a short delay.

8. Take messages accurately

When taking a message, the information you pass on should mean the person returning the call can seamlessly answer the query without the caller having to repeat everything.

Always make sure the information is:

- accurate
- includes all of the details
- includes the name of the person calling and who they are calling about if a third party.

9. Close on a positive note

When you're about to hang up with a caller, try to end the conversation on a positive note. You can do this by thanking them or wishing them well.

10. The specific don'ts.

Never lose your temper; this can be difficult if the caller is being aggressive or unreasonable. Here are four steps to always follow:

- Stay calm, no matter how upset a person may be.
- Listen and ask them to confirm things.
- It is important to show empathy when dealing with an angry person.
- Apologise.
- Make steps to make it right.

Here are some key phrases that can be used:

- I am sorry this has happened.
- Please tell me more about.
- I can understand why you would be upset.
- This is important — to both you and me.
- Let me see if I have this right.
- Let's work together to find a solution.
- Here's what I'm going to do for you.
- What can we do to resolve this now.

Many of these put the ball back in their court to find a way through, whatever the problem is, and give them the opportunity to tell you what they are really upset about.

If they use unacceptable language, it is perfectly acceptable to say, "Your language is causing me offence, I am going to end this call now". Equally, any threats can be immediately treated the same way. You should never be in a situation that you find uncomfortable.

If their tone is unacceptable say, "I am sorry, but I do not wish to be spoken to in this tone, please change your tone." If they persist, "I am going to hang up the phone now as I do not feel comfortable with the tone / manner you are speaking to me, I am ending the call as I feel uncomfortable." Then report it immediately.

However, if you feel the call is becoming out of control say, "I feel that we are not achieving the right outcome, I am going to take down your number and ask a senior member of staff to call you back."

Allow them to reply and, if needed, repeat your message.

Before ending the call always say, "I am going to end the call now", leave it 10 seconds to allow a response, then say "good bye and say someone else will call you back as promised" and end the call.

If a visitor makes you feel uncomfortable say, "I am leaving the room now, I do not feel safe in your company." If you cannot get past, then pick up the phone. You should never feel under threat at work. (or anywhere else)

E Staying safe on the phone - further guidelines and definitions

Libel

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. When staff are speaking on the phone, they should not bring ME CIC into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Confidentiality

Any member or client related matters are all confidential and should remain so at all times.

Discrimination and harassment

Staff should speak to anyone else in a way that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief.
- using calls to bully another individual.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. For staff, breaches of policy may incur disciplinary action, depending on the severity of the issue. Please refer to your contract of employment which details our disciplinary procedures. Staff who are unsure about whether something they propose to do on social media might breach this policy, should seek advice from the CEO.

Public Interest Disclosure

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, if a staff member releases information through IWSB's phone calls that is considered to be in the interest of the public, ME CIC's Whistleblowing Policy must be initiated before any further action is taken.

Sue Bungey

Chair of Directors

Dated June 2026