You will not be able to communicate effectively with people until they are confident that you are taking their complaint seriously. You can do this by:

Acknowledgement: acknowledge how people are feeling by saying something like, “Tell me what happened” and give them your full attention.

Empathising: if you reassure people that you understand why they are upset or angry, they will respond more effectively to you, for example, “I can see how that would make you upset/angry” and offer a positive response such as “Let’s see what we can do to sort this out for you”. Use the person’s name in conversation.

Taking control: every discussion has a beginning, middle and an end. Show that you are taking action to resolve the situation by using positive verbal and/or body language such as questioning. For example, “tell me about” and then confirming the information given to you is correct whilst taking notes and demonstrating that you are alert and interested by making suggestions on how the matter could be resolved. If you can, and it is warranted, offer to look into things further, by going the extra distance to seek out a workable solution for everyone concerned.

Most people will respond positively by becoming calmer and engaging in normal discussion with you if you can remember to follow these steps. However, there will be times when you will be required to deal with someone who is completely unreasonable or who may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In situations like this, you have the right to end the discussion. You do not have to put up with extremely abusive and threatening behaviour. In such circumstances you should:

- Politely ask the person to stop behaving in this way or you will terminate the telephone call or interview;
- If they persist and are not responding to your request and you are dealing with them by telephone, hang up and advise your line manager;
- If it is a face to face situation, ask them politely to leave the office and advise your line manager of the situation. If the abusive person refuses to leave, you should call the police, asking that they attend to assist in escorting the abusive person from the premises.

Your manager may want to consider writing to the abusive person reminding him/her that this type of abuse towards employees will not be tolerated and in extreme cases your manager may warn him/her that service delivery could be reduced or withdrawn as a result of their behaviour. You can have the abusive person formally charged by the police if you wish and you think it necessary.

If following an abusive or violent incident you are very upset, talk to your manager about this. Your manager should complete an Accident/Incident Reporting Form (HR14), with you as part of the de-briefing and support measures that they need to provide in dealing with extreme situations you can contact the Counselling Service on 0141 332 9833. In addition, the Health, Safety & Care Team are available to provide advice and support on 506246/48 or Housing & Social Work Services have a trauma assistance team who can provide de-briefing for larger scale scenarios.
If you would like to improve your skills in handling abusive situations you can attend relevant training. Contact the Employee Development Team about this on 506244. If you would like information about general health, safety & care relating to your work, contact the Health, Safety & Care Team on 506246/506248. Information is also available on the intranet under Human Resources, Health, Safety and Care Team. However, here are some tips on how you can deal with difficult situations at work.

**Be friendly**
Be pleasant when in the office, try not to let a bad mood affect anyone else, or anyone else’s bad mood affect you.

**Be honest**
Always apologise for mistakes and try your best to give reliable information but admit any mistakes you have made and don’t pass on the blame.

**Be consistent**
Treat everyone with the same respect and dignity.

**Be fair**
If service users feel they have been treated fairly they will be positive towards you and remember you for this.

**Be efficient**
If you show enthusiasm and commitment, people will respond positively and have confidence in you.