

YMCA Housing - Compliments, Suggestions & Complaints Policy

About YMCA Housing

We provide safe, affordable places to live that feel like home and focus on community spirit and togetherness. Our approach to support is based on strengths, and our residents are always at the centre of their own support plans. The support they receive reflects their aspirations to access education, training, employment and volunteering, their future housing needs, and addresses any physical and mental wellbeing needs. Our aim is to empower residents to gain the tools and skills that enable stability, independent living, promising futures, and connection to their communities.

Currently, we provide housing services and supported living across 12 different districts in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire and we are constantly looking to expand this to help even more vulnerable people in the community and changing lives.

1. Context

YMCA has a duty to provide a service which falls in line with the occupancy agreement signed by all residents upon moving into any of our Housing services and our contractual obligations.

We recognise that there may be times when a resident wishes to bring to our attention any compliment, suggestion or complaint relating to the service they may receive.

YMCA will treat all compliments, suggestions, or complaints as a learning point for continual improvement of our accommodation services.

This Policy links to the charity's obligations under the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that came into force on 1st April 2023.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to residents and any other person who is affected by YMCA Housing services.

Family members of residents or visitors to the service, health workers, local councillors or other advocates who are making a complaint on behalf of a complainant; providing the complainant has authorised them to do so.

3. Purpose

To allow residents the opportunity to offer their compliments, suggestions or complaint regarding the services provided by YMCA.

To continually assess YMCA's performance to identify ways that we can improve the services we provide.

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We will attempt to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible and encourage residents to speak to support staff as soon as a problem arises. We will aim to resolve matters, and prevent escalation, by understanding and putting in place simple remedies.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

We are committed to treating everyone fairly, recognising the protected characteristics set out in Equalities legislation.

We will make appropriate arrangements where necessary to ensure that individuals with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected. This could involve providing communication in alternative languages or formats.

5. Definitions

When considering feedback, we will consider whether it is either:

- a) A Service Request
- b) A Complaint

These terms are defined below, and in the Complaint Handling Code and wishes of the customer will be considered when deciding which category is appropriate.

Service request – A request from an individual requiring action to be taken by the charity to put something right. A complaint should be raised when the customer raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.

Suggestion –

We recognise that not all feedback is a complaint; sometimes it is a suggestion on how we can improve our service.

We will actively encourage people to make suggestions for improvement. This includes:

- Talking to individuals while they are residents/involved in services
- Monitoring social media and online forums
- Asking employees about resident and other feedback
- Reading online reviews by residents and customers
- Resident feedback surveys, suggestion forms and forums led by Project Voice

We recognise that suggestions may be things that take a longer time to respond to as they may make suggestions of significant change to services or property standards. We will respond to all suggestions but on a bespoke timeline in line with the suggestions raised.

Project Voice will lead on acting on suggestions made to improve services and capture “you said, we did” to feedback to individuals on points made.

Complaint – an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the charity, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group. Where dissatisfaction is expressed about a Housing service and we have been unable to remedy the situation to the individual’s satisfaction, the individual chooses to formalise the matter, a complaint must be lodged within 12 months of the occurrence which is being complained about. We may accept discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are reasonable grounds for doing so.

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Working Days

Working days are defined as Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.

6. Exemptions

The following types of complaint cannot be pursued through the Complaints process where the issue:

- Has already been raised through the complaints process
- Is, has or may be handled under the reviews process (e.g. evictions)
- It, has or should be handled through legal action
- Is an initial notification or request for service or information
- Is an initial report of anti-social behaviour
- Is regarding a staff/volunteer not related to the housing service. In this case, please refer to the Whistleblowing policy
- Is raised anonymously or without any means of speaking to the complainant in order to substantiate their complaint

If a resident wishes to request repair, report another resident's behaviour or ask about replacement furniture, they are not making a complaint and it will not fall under the scope of this policy.

7. Exceptional Variation

A tiny minority of individuals may account for a disproportionately and unreasonably high volume of complaints, diverting significant time and resource away from other residents. The following are examples where a complainant could be considered to be placing an unreasonable demand on the charity:

- Requesting large volumes of information, asking for responses within a short space of time, refusing to speak to an individual or insisting on speaking to another.
- Refusing to accept the answer that has been provided continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence, continuously adding or changing the subject matter of the complaint
- Refusal to cooperate (e.g. complaining without responding to clear and appropriate requests to clarify the complaint) and or requests for further information to investigate it
- Verbal abuse, aggression, violence (this is not just limited to actual physical or verbal abuse but can include derogatory remarks, rudeness, inflammatory allegations, and threats of violence)
- Overload of letters, calls, emails or contact via social media (this could include the frequency of contact as well as the volume or correspondence received as well as the frequency and length of telephone calls)

A Head of Service must confirm that a complainant is acting unreasonably. Where this is so, we will be:

- Providing a single point of contact
- Limiting contact to a single form i.e. writing, email or telephone only
- Limiting contact to certain times or to a limited number of times per week or month
- Declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless any additional evidence or information is provided
- Only considering a certain number of issues in a specific period

The above course of action will be confirmed in writing to the complainant, alongside an explanation of where their complaint is considered unreasonable and what action is required to address this.

8. Resident or external complaint about a Trustee, Chief Executive or member of the Executive Leadership Team

Where a complaint is received about a trustee, the Chief Executive or a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the investigation will be commissioned by the Chair of the Governance and People committee in the first instance. In commissioning this work, the committee may choose to bring in an independent person to carry out the investigation if they consider it necessary to do so. Where the complaint is about a member of the People & Governance committee, then the Chair of Trustees will work with the Company Secretary and Chief Executive to commission an investigation.

For the avoidance of doubt, this Complaints Policy is for residents or external complaints.

9. Data Protection & Information sharing

We will share relevant information with appropriate agencies in line with Data Protection Legislation that governs when and how we can share personal information. For further information, please refer to our data protection page at [Data Protection, Privacy and Cookie Policies - YMCA](#)

10. Staff training and development

We will use anonymised complaints to support staff training and continuous development. This includes:

- Ensuring all relevant staff are trained in the Complaints Policy, the Housing Ombudsman Code, and principles of fair and effective complaint handling.
- Providing targeted training where trends or recurring issues are identified through complaint analysis.
- Promoting a positive complaints culture where staff view feedback as an opportunity to learn and improve.
- Ensuring staff understand their role in resolving complaints promptly and respectfully, and know when to escalate.

We will use anonymised complaints to support staff with training in delivering the Complaints Policy.

11. Procedure Statements

YMCA welcomes compliments, suggestions and complaints and aims to resolve concerns as early as possible. All complaints will be acknowledged and responded to within the timescales set out in this procedure, and outcomes will be confirmed in writing once investigations are complete.

We record all formal complaints in Inform and use this information to support service improvement. Complaint data, including numbers received and upheld, is reported to commissioners in line with contractual requirements and included in KPI reporting to the Board of Trustees.

Each complaint will only be considered once under this procedure, unless escalated in line with the process. Compliance with response times is monitored through Inform and overseen by the relevant Supported Housing Manager and the customer service team.

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If a resident remains dissatisfied after completing our internal process, they may contact a Designated Person (MP or Councillor) or the Housing Ombudsman. YMCA will comply with any decisions made by the Ombudsman.

12. Logging Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints

Individuals can log this by:

- using the form provided (Appendix 1) and handing in to any YMCA Housing site
- Submitting in writing, verbally or online **Complaints Form (digital) – Fill out form** (available in different languages) to a member of YMCA staff
- Via social media platforms
- By letter or email to **complaints@ymcacg.org**

A summary step by step guide to this policy will be made available at Housing sites and on our website. Where an individual may need help completing a form, assistance can be provided by YMCA staff or by a third party such as Citizens Advice Bureau.

Residents can raise this through any channel and with any staff member. All staff are trained to recognise and log complaints. Should you require any of the information in another format or need support to participate in the process, please let the team know.

Where the complaint concerns a safeguarding issue relating to people living in the YMCA then the YMCA safeguarding policy will apply.

The officer reviewing the complaint will also consider whether the seriousness of the matter triggers any regulatory reporting requirements. If there are any questions over the most appropriate steps to take, then the advice of the Executive Director will be sought.

Compliments and suggestions should be logged on our database, Inform. Services should display number of compliments, complaints, suggestions and outcomes periodically on their notice boards / display screens.

Staff members receiving notification of a verbal complaint must record it on our system, Inform and issue the acknowledgement letter. All completed complaint forms must be uploaded onto Inform and sent to our complaint's inbox for monitoring.

Should we not accept a complaint we will provide reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process, and you will have the right to take the decision with the Housing Ombudsman.

13. Stage 1

A complaint will first be investigated at **stage 1** of the policy. YMCA will progress a complaint in a fair and transparent manner:

- a) Within **5 working days** we will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide an indication of when a substantive response to the complaint might be given. If we consider the matter to be a Service Request rather than a Complaint, then we will confirm that at this stage.
- b) After acknowledging the complaint, we will contact the complainant by their preferred point of contact, review the complaint and gather further information. We

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will also meet with members of staff and stakeholders as necessary to agree a response.

- c) After arranging to meet the complainant (or acknowledging the complaint if no meeting is proposed) we will write to the complainant setting out our findings and if necessary, offering resolution. We will respond with a decision within **10 working days** of receipt of the complaint. If this time limit cannot be met, we will write to the complainant within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date (which should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, they will have 2 weeks at Stage 2. The procedure for making an review will be set out in the complaint response. If no request is forthcoming, then the complaint will be closed.

The complainant will be asked to state the outcome being sought and the nature of the complaint.

A member of YMCA Deputy or Supported Housing Manager will investigate the complaint. Usually, this will be the person the individual has complained to.

Complaints cannot be dealt with by volunteers or workers from outside agencies.

14. Stage 2

If the resident is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 of the procedure, or feels that the procedure has not been followed, the next stage is to ask for a review of the decision.

You will receive an acknowledgement of your Stage 2 requests within 5 working days of the escalation requests being received. We will also log and define such request within this time period.

Grounds for escalation are:

- Any aspect of their complaint has not been upheld
- They are not satisfied with the method of redress (e.g., the action taken in response to a complaint)
- The request must relate only to the issues raised in the original complaint. New or unrelated concerns cannot be introduced at this stage and should instead be raised as a separate complaint.
- Any additional evidence submitted must relate directly to the original complaint.

A review of the decision will be taken by a member of the Senior Leadership Team or other appointed person who is not involved in the original decision. Where the complaint is about the Chief Executive, an Executive Director or Trustee, then this stage will be coordinated by the Governance & People committee or Chair of the Board as is necessary and appropriate in the circumstances.

We will respond with a decision within **20 working days** from receipt of the request to escalate. If this time limit cannot be met, we will write to the complainant within 20 working days of receiving the escalation, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date (which should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason).

15. Investigating and Responding to Complaints

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Investigations should include contact with the complainant to clarify the issue, the outcome being sought and the complainant's understanding of the process.

Once the investigation is complete, the investigating staff member should issue the final response letter which should include the complaint category, a summary of the outcome of the investigation, whether we uphold the complaint or not, an apology or an expression of regret and a clear statement that the letter is the final response and that complainants who are dissatisfied with the final response will need to refer to the next stage of the process.

All action taken to handle the complaint should be logged on Inform against the relevant 'CCIA' record.

Learning points from any complaint should be discussed with staff by the Supported Housing Manager e.g. in team meetings.

16. Remedies

Remedies will reflect the impact on residents and ensure agreed timelines for completion. Remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.

Appropriate remedies include:

- An apology
- An explanation of what went wrong
- Delivery of the service
- Action required to correct the failure and actions to prevent it occurring in the future
- Changing policies, procedures or practices
- Providing financial remedy (please see below for further details)
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Reconsidering or changing a decision

Financial remedy

If a complaint is upheld, we will reimburse losses directly caused by an identified act or omission of the Charity. We will not replace old items with new ones; instead, we will provide an appropriate remedy by repairing or replacing damaged items, or otherwise rectifying the issue, rather than offering a cash payment (except where a cash payment is specifically required due to the circumstances of the complaint).

In line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, where YMCA fails to meet the required complaint response timescales at Stage 1 or Stage 2 without good reason, this may constitute a service failure. In such cases, the resident may be eligible for a financial remedy to acknowledge the delay, inconvenience, or impact caused by the failure to meet the statutory timescales.

Financial remedies will only be processed after approval by the designated authority in line with YMCA's Financial Regulations. The complaint handler must seek approval before committing to any reimbursement or replacement.

Alternative Options – residents only

Where the complaint relates to regulated housing services then complaints may be passed directly to the Ombudsman if the complaint has passed through all the internal procedures for considering complaints against the landlord.

Housing Ombudsman

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The Localism Act 2011 introduced changes to the Housing complaints process from 1 April 2013. You can now contact a designated person to consider your complaint when you have reached the end of our process. Designated persons are impartial and they will try to resolve local housing issues.

Who is a designated person?

- Local Ward Councillor
- Any MP in the country

What can they do?

A designated person will try to resolve your issues with us. If they are unable to do this, they will advise you that there is nothing further we can do for you or refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

Contacting the Housing Ombudsman directly

If you do not wish to go through a designated person, you may contact the Housing Ombudsman yourself. They can be reached directly at: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Ofsted- Children and Young People

As above, any parent/carer at any time can submit a complaint to Ofsted about any aspect of registered childcare provision. Ofsted will consider and investigate all complaints received. Children, young people, parents and carers have the right to contact Staff must not discourage or delay a young person from raising a concern with Ofsted.

They can be contacted at:

OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store St, Manchester M12WD
Tel: 0300 1231231 www.ofsted.gov.uk

Standard Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints timescales apply except where safeguarding concerns require immediate action where a complaint indicates that a child or young person may be at risk of harm, or concerns the conduct of a person in a position of trust.

YMCA will maintain a designated pool of trained complaint handlers for complaints arising within Ofsted-registered or under-18 services. These individuals will receive additional training in child-friendly practice, safeguarding escalation, advocacy rights, and regulatory reporting.

Please refer to the XXX guidance here for further information on how our nursery services operate.

17. Monitoring of Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints

Response times will be monitored via our system, Inform, by the relevant Supported Housing Manager and our customer service team who monitor the complaints inbox on a regular basis.

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We will use complaints as an opportunity to learn and implement remedies to prevent future recurrences where appropriate. When closed, complaints will be analysed to:

- Assess whether the service standards set out in this policy have been met
- Assess quality of response to complaints
- Assess that appropriate action has been taken within reasonable response times
- Assess whether the policy has been applied fairly and consistently
- Identify lessons learned
- Decide on any necessary communication to staff and residents
- Identify any required amendments to procedures
- Report on the number of complaints deemed vexatious or repetitive

We will routinely monitor our performance in implementing this policy and report outcomes to the Executive Leadership Team and Trustee Board.

We will conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys, led by Project Voice.

18. Reporting Responsibilities

The Director of Housing & Community will produce:

- a quarterly complaints report to the Quality and Performance Committee and
- annual complaints report to the Trustee Board

The Associate Director of Housing Julie Flinn at julie.flinn@ymcacg.org will hold the Complaints Officer designation for the purposes of the Housing Ombudsman Code.

The Complaints Officer is responsible for liaising with the various nominated individuals, the Chief Executive, and the Chair of the Board about reporting complaints to Regulators.

The Member Responsible for Complaints is Simon Box.

Read this procedure in conjunction with

- Anti-social Behaviour, Harassment, and Resident Behaviour Management Procedure
- The relevant occupancy agreement

Date reviewed: March 2026

Next review: March 2027

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Appendix 1 – Complaint form

For Office Use: InForm Ref

PLEASE COMPLETE IN FULL & RETURN TO RECEPTION

Complaint Form

Your name:

If you are making this complaint on behalf of someone else (please ensure they also complete **section A** of the Declaration below)

Name of the person:

.....

Your relationship to them:

.....

Has the resident given you permission to act on their behalf?

☐ Yes

☐ No

(If no, please explain why you are raising this complaint and any safeguarding or advocacy reasons.)

Accommodation site:.....

Room number:

Phone number:.....

E-mail address:.....

How would you like us to contact you? (one or both to be selected)

☐ Email address

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☐ Phone Number

☐ Face-to-Face appointment

Please indicate the member of staff, if you have discussed your complaint with staff previously:

Name of staff member.....

Nature of complaint (please tick)

Standard of service provided ☐

Failure to provide an agreed service ☐

Attitude or conduct of a staff member ☐

YMCA has not followed agreed procedure ☐

Other (please specify):

.....
.....
.....

Please explain the reason for your complaint in further detail below.

Please provide as much detail as possible and set out any specific matters that you would like us to investigate. If you have any additional evidence, you may submit this alongside this complaint form.

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What are you unhappy with?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date of initial complaint (if made at Stage 1):.....

Accessibility Needs

Do you require this process in an alternative format or any reasonable adjustments?

☐ Yes (please specify): _____

☐ No

Declaration

A- If you are making this complaint on behalf of someone else:

I confirm that I give permission for the person named above to act on my behalf in relation to this complaint, and for YMCA to share the necessary information to investigate the issues raised.

Resident name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

B- I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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How to submit

- E-mail: complaints@ymcacg.org
- Online: [Complaints Form \(digital\)](#)
- In person: Hand to Reception or speak to a member of staff
- Via social media platforms