

One YMCA Housing - Compliments, Suggestions & Complaints Procedure

About YMCA

YMCA believes in fairness and opportunity. There are essential building blocks for a full and rewarding life: a safe home; acceptance; guidance; friendship; physical and mental health; academic support; employment skills; and access to real opportunities. Many young people have never known these things; other people have lost one or more as they grew up, but we all need them. All of us. At YMCA, we provide these critical foundations for a fresh, strong start for young people and a better quality of life in the community.

Context

One YMCA has a duty to provide a service which falls in line with the occupancy agreement signed by all residents upon moving into the service 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.

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

Scope

This procedure applies to all volunteers, residents, visitors, users of the hostel premises and contractors.

Purpose

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

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

Definitions

It is important that the difference is known between a **complaint** and **reporting anti-social behaviour**, an **enquiry** and **asking for a repair**. This procedure covers compliments, suggestions, and complaints only.

Compliment

If a resident, volunteer, visitor or contractor would like to inform One YMCA of an aspect of the service that they like, they will be giving a **compliment**.

Suggestion

If a resident, volunteer, visitor or contractor would like to suggest something One YMCA should do/offer/have/change, they are making a **suggestion**.

Complaint

If a resident, volunteer, visitor or contractor would like to express to One YMCA that they are unhappy with any part of the service, they are **making a complaint**.

A complaint is usually an expression of dissatisfaction with a service, a failure to carry out an agreed service, failure to meet agreed timescales or failure to meet service standards or specification, on a matter which is the responsibility of One YMCA.

The following are examples of the types of things that may be raised as a complaint (this is not an exhaustive list):

- how an individual's application or referral process was dealt with
- dissatisfaction with a repair or the way the repair was carried out,
- dissatisfaction with how we have dealt with discrimination, harassment nuisance or anti-social behaviour.
- unsatisfactory conduct of a member of staff or contractor
- missed or late appointments by staff
- discrepancies with rent account / arrears
- dissatisfaction with the way One YMCA has applied a policy or procedure (but not criticism of the policy or procedure itself)
- A failure to meet service standards
- A failure to comply with contractual responsibilities
- A failure to fulfil statutory Health & Safety or Hygiene and Environmental standards

Unfounded Complaint

A complaint is unfounded if, on investigation, One YMCA is unable to determine that the issue existed or if the complaint falls within the following categories:

- a complaint that is being dealt with by legal proceedings / court e.g. eviction
- a complaint being reported more than 5 days after the incident
- a complaint about a service not provided by One YMCA
- anonymous complaints
- a complaint already considered but not escalated within the specified time frame
- a claim for compensation being dealt with by One YMCA insurers
- Issues that should be resolved using a different procedure e.g. the appeals procedure

If an resident wishes to request a 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 procedure.

Working Days

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

Procedure Statements

One YMCA welcomes compliments, suggestions and complaints from all residents, volunteers, visitors, and contractors

One YMCA aims to resolve complaints at the first point of contact.

One YMCA actively seeks to improve its service and compliments, suggestions and complaints are an important part of this process. One YMCA will take learning points from all compliments, suggestions, and upheld complaints.

One YMCA has a 4-stage complaint process, designed to ensure that a complaint is handled appropriately in all cases.

One YMCA will acknowledge all complaints in writing within the time frame detailed in the procedure. This time frame differs for each stage of the process.

One YMCA will write to all complainants in response to their complaint once the matter has been fully investigated, within the time frame detailed in the procedure. This time frame differs for each stage of the process.

One YMCA keeps a record of all formal complaints received and a separate record for all formal complaints upheld. One YMCA will report on complaints as per its contractual requirements with commissioners.

One YMCA reports numbers of complaints received, and numbers of complaints upheld to the Board of Trustees as part of its KPI reporting requirements.

The same complaint will only be addressed through our internal procedure once, except for escalation in accordance with the procedure.

Response times and compliance with this procedure will be monitored through our database, Inform, and will be reported to the relevant Supported Housing Manager.

If, having been through One YMCA's complaints process, a resident is still not satisfied, the resident is entitled to:

- Contact a 'Designated Person' (local MP or councillor)
- Have the complaint reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman

One YMCA agrees to abide by any decisions reached by the Ombudsman.

1.0 Logging Compliments and Suggestions

Individuals can log a complaint using the form provided (Appendix 1) or submitted in writing or verbally to a member of One YMCA staff.

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

2.0 Complaints

A complaint can be any expression of dissatisfaction with the services we provide. A complaint can be made using a complaint form, verbally in person, by telephone, by email or by letter.

We will record, investigate, and resolve complaints promptly, politely and fairly. The emphasis of the complaints procedure is always on 'putting things right' and making reasonable decisions which reflect that we have considered the individual circumstances of the complainant.

2.1 Who can use the complaints procedure

Residents and any other person who is affected by One YMCA 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.

3.0 Complaint Stages

There are 4 stages to the **Complaints Procedure**, one informal and three formal:

3.1 Stage 1 (Informal)

This is generally a verbal complaint to any member of staff.

Written acknowledgement of the complaint will be given within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.

The complainant will be asked to state what they want us to do to resolve their complaint.

A member of One YMCA staff will investigate the complaint, as directed by a Deputy or Supported Housing Manager. Usually, this will be the person the individual has complained to.

A written response to the informal complaint will be given within 5 working days of acknowledgement.

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

3.2 Stage 2 (Formal)

Should the individual be unhappy with the response to his or her informal complaint or should he or she choose to make a formal complaint from the outset, then the person needs to put their complaint in writing within 5 days of the issue arising or 5 days from receipt of stage 1 outcome, ideally using a One YMCA Complaint Form. Help with completing this form will be provided where required. A resident may appoint an advocate to complete the form on their behalf.

Written acknowledgment of the complaint will be given within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint.

The matter will then be fully investigated by a designated staff member as directed by a Deputy or Supported Housing Manager. A written response to the complaint will be given within 10 working days of acknowledgement.

3.3 Stage 3 (Formal)

Should the resident remain dissatisfied, the next stage of the complaints process is to complain to the relevant Supported Housing Manager. The complaint should be made in writing within 10 days of the date of the written response to Stage 2.

The Supported Housing Manager will respond in writing within 10 working days since receipt of the desire to escalate to Stage 3 and advise on any other processes should the individual wish to take the matter further.

3.4 Stage 4 (Formal)

If the individual remains unhappy with the outcome of stage 3 the individual has the right to request the complaint to be heard at the final formal stage.

At Stage 4, the relevant Head of Housing will hear and respond. The Head of Housing should not have been involved at earlier stages of the complaints procedure.

The role of the Head of Housing is to undertake the final review within One YMCA of the complaint. They will review the process followed by staff and ensure that there has been a correct application of the procedure.

The purpose is not to re-judge the decisions of One YMCA staff unless, on hearing the case, they find the decision to conflict with the facts and procedure of One YMCA.

Staff from the relevant accommodation site will be asked to provide any information that the Head of Housing needs to reach their decision.

The complainant will be given the option to provide a verbal account at this final stage via an in-person meeting or by telephone. The complainant may wish to provide a written statement which will be considered.

Missing a Stage

An individual may choose to make a formal complaint from the outset and bypass Stage 1. However, all complaints must follow the formal stages sequentially. Any complaint which skips any of Stages 2 to 4 will be treated in accordance with the sequence and not in accordance with the stage the individual has chosen to complain at. For example, a complaint which is made straight in at Stage 4 will be treated as a Stage 2 complaint.

4.0 Recording Complaints

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.

The Supported Housing Manager will identify the investigating staff member and communicate that to the complainant.

5.0 Investigating and Responding to Complaints

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

6.0 Remedies

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

7.0 Alternative Options – residents only

Once you have been through all three stages of the complaints procedure and you are still dissatisfied, you can appeal to the Housing Ombudsman for housing related issues.

Housing Ombudsman

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. You have to wait 8 weeks from the date of your Stage 3 complaint response before the Housing Ombudsman will consider your case.

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

8.0 Monitoring of Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints

Response times will be monitored via our system, Inform by the Supported Housing Manager on a regular basis.

Read this procedure in conjunction with

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

Reviewed by:

Nikky Manning and Samantha Voyle (Heads of Housing)

Date reviewed: Feb 2023

The following are examples of the types of things that residents/visitors might complain about – this is not an exhaustive list.

Standard of service provided

Dissatisfaction with the standard of a repair or the way the repair was carried out.
Dissatisfaction with the standard of housekeeping.
Dissatisfaction with the standard of catering service.
Discrepancies with your rent account / arrears.

Failure to provide an agreed service

Failure to fulfil a statutory Health & Safety, Hygiene or Environmental standard.
Failure to fulfil contractual responsibility.

Attitude or conduct of staff member

Unsatisfactory conduct of a member of staff.
Missed or late appointments by staff.
Unsatisfactory attitude of a member of staff

YMCA has not followed agreed procedure or policy

How the application / referral process was dealt with.
Dissatisfaction with how we have dealt with discrimination, harassment, nuisance or anti-social behaviour.
Dissatisfaction with the way ONEYMCA has carried out policies/procedures (but not a criticism of the procedure itself) including handling of complaints.
Failure to meet service standards.