

Complaints policy and procedure

Version History

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Brief Description of Changes
2023/1	September 2023	Board of Trustees	Organisational wide policy Incorporating requirements of the Housing Ombudsmans Complaint Handling Code
2025/1	TBC	TBC	Further amendments to reflect the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code 2024 requirements. Overall review to ensure policy meets requirements for OFSTED.

Policy Owner

Head of Central Services.

Purpose and Scope

YMCA East Surrey is committed to providing accessible, quality services and achieving the highest standards. We recognise that from time to time there may be concerns or complaints, that our stakeholders have the right to raise such complaints or concerns, and that they need a mechanism to do so to ensure an early and effective resolution of complaints.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a consistent and positive approach to resolve complaints promptly, fairly and politely, so service users know what to expect and when.
- Learn from where we have made mistakes and use the experience to inform improvements to service delivery and thereby increased satisfaction for all service users and the members of the public.

This policy applies to all complaints received across all YMCA East Surrey services. Any service user or stakeholder can make a complaint.

This policy does not apply to:

- Allegations of abuse, neglect or discrimination, which will be managed through the appropriate Safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Employee or volunteer complaints which will be managed through YMCA East Surrey specific policies.
- Disputes between housing residents which should be raised with a member of staff through the house rules procedures.
- Issues which occurred over twelve months ago.
- Issues which are or have been subject to legal proceedings.
- Any element of the complaint relating to an insurance claim

- Complaints which have previously exhausted the complaints procedures.
- Complaints being pursued in a vexatious or unreasonable manner

In the event that the decision is made not to investigate a complaint YMCA East Surrey will ensure that this is communicated to the complainant, setting out reasons why the complaint will not be taken any further.

Housing residents have the right to challenge a decision by raising a complaint with the Housing Ombudsman (see external advisors below).

Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of people'.

(Housing Ombudsman Code 2024)

A complaint may therefore not include the word 'complaint' to be treated as such.

A complaint can be made by any service user (e.g. young people, residents, gym members) or other stakeholders affected or likely to be affected by the service, actions or decisions taken by YMCA East Surrey. A complaint can also be made by someone acting on behalf of a service user, with their consent.

Service request

A service request is a request made by a Housing residents(s) requiring action to put something right. These are usually resolved quickly and do not often require a written response. Service requests for maintenance issues will be recorded as a repair order on the housing database (Pyramid). If further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter or if requested by the resident, the issue will be recorded as a complaint.

Vexatious and/or complaints raised in unreasonable way

This is where a complainant:

- a) raises a disproportionately high volume of complaints which is placing an unreasonable demand on the charity, or
- b) raises repeated unfounded complaints about YMCA East Surrey

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following related policies and procedures:

- Code of conduct

- Data protection
- Disciplinary
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Grievance
- Safeguarding (Adults and Children)
- Whistleblowing

Policy Principles

The key principles that underpin this policy are:

- To increase people's confidence by treating all complaints seriously.
- To actively learn from and improve services as a result of the service user experiences.
- To have a flexible approach to resolving complaints by receiving them in any format, providing effective support and ensuring the circumstances of each complaint is considered on an individual basis.
- To provide a seamless approach to complaints handling and investigations
- To ensure organisational openness and fairness when dealing with complaints
- To place the emphasis on early and effective resolution of complaints
- To deal with the complaint as sensitively as possible. Respecting confidentiality for the person reporting a complaint or concern and adhere to YMCA East Surrey's Data Protection Policy.
- To ensure an approach which is fair to people using our services. By adherence to The Equality Act 2010 and YMCA East Surrey's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Ensuring that all service users have access to this policy in an appropriate format and make reasonable adjustments as necessary.
- Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Code

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees

- Oversee the learning from complaints and compliance with the policy and procedure
- Agree a designated governance lead for complaints who will act as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) for the purposes of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Ensure there is a system for making and monitoring complaints.
- Make themselves available should a complaint be escalated to more senior representative.
- The Head of Children & Young People and/or Head of Housing will notify Ofsted of any complaints, at the time of inspection.

Head of Housing

- Will act as the Complaints Officer for the purposes of the Housing Ombudsman's Code
- Ensures reporting deadlines are met in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Code

Head of Central Services

- Oversees the register of complaints received
- Ensures that records relating to complaints are kept securely and destroyed safely in line with data protection regulations
- Regularly reports to the SLT, Governance and Risk Committee and to the Board on the number and status of complaints received.

Managers

- Ensure posters are displayed on notice boards across all service locations to make service users, parents/carers, and all stakeholders aware of the complaints policy and procedure.
- Seek to resolve complaints fairly and within the timescales set with this policy
- Follow the procedure below.
- Ensures staff and volunteers receive adequate training to ensure they recognise when a complaint has been made and what steps need to be taken.

Staff and volunteers

- Ensure that any complaint received by them is dealt with in adherence to the policy and procedure.
- Forward all complaints to the appropriate manager and/or mailbox (Admin@ymcaeast Surrey.org.uk).

Complaints process overview

Complaints may be made in a number of ways, dissatisfaction to response from service request (from housing resident), letter, telephone, in person, by email or using the feedback form on the website [Contact Us - YMCA East Surrey](#).

Complaints should normally be made within twelve months of the matter occurring or from the date it came to your notice.

There are two stages to the complaints process:

Stage 1:

- Complainant receives written acknowledgment within 5 working days to confirm the complaint has been received and indicate expectations for how long the investigation will take if it can be reasonably assessed at that point.
- In most cases, a full response to the complaint will be provided within 10 working days (refer to appendix 1). However, if this is not possible because for example, a detailed investigation is required, an interim reply will be provided explaining what is being done to deal with the complaint together with a revised timescale which will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. For a delayed responses to a resident complaint, contact details of the Ombudsman will be included in this response.
- In the event that there are any outstanding actions reported in the complaint response, the complainant will receive prompt updates as appropriate.
- In some cases where the complainant has expressed a preference for a telephone discussion regarding the outcome, or has expressed that they would like to have a

representative to deal with or accompany them at a meeting this preference will be acknowledged. The outcome will always be followed up by a written response so that both parties have a written record of the outcome.

Stage 2:

- If the complainant feels that the complaint has not been dealt with to their satisfaction, the complaint can be escalated by sending a letter of appeal to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) within 10 working days of receiving the written response. They will need to state why they are unhappy with the outcome and include copies of any correspondence exchanged during the earlier stages. The complainant will be notified in writing within 20 working days from the date of the appeal. The decision made at this level is considered final.

At each stage the complainant must be confirmed of the following in plain language:

- The complaint stage
- The complaint definition
- The decision of the complaint
- The reasons for the decisions made
- The details of any remedy offered to put things right
- Details of any outstanding actions
- Details of how to escalate the matter to external advisors if dissatisfied with the outcome of stage two (see below)

If the complaint is about the CEO or a Trustee, the complainant will need to contact the Chair of the Trustees who will advise of the procedure that will be followed together with associated timescales.

Recording of complaints – My Concern

All complaints raised are recorded on complaints register (My Concern). The information held on the register will include details of the complaint(s), the investigating officer, key dates, action taken, outcomes, learning and any EDI data including reasonable adjustments required. Where necessary details of the complaint may be shared with the HR Manager.

My Concern is an electronic register and only accessed by those responsible for complaints monitoring and Subject Access Requests.

External Advisors

If the complainant is not happy with the outcome of a complaint further advice or support can be sought as follows:

1. The Charity Commission :

[Complain about a charity - GOV.UK](#)

2. Regarding any of YMCA East Surrey registered childcare or housing provision submit a complaint to Ofsted on enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or call 03001234666.

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3. Residents have the right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point throughout the duration of the complaint: Contact details are as follows:
- a. Online form [Make a complaint - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
 - b. Email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
 - c. Phone 0300 111 3000
 - d. Fax 020 7831 1942
 - e. Send a letter to Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Implementation and review

Monitor:	Head of Central Services
Approve:	SLT
Endorse:	Board of Trustees
Review:	January 2026

Appendix 1

Content of response

The response to the complaint must include the following:

- 1) Definition of complaint
- 2) Clear reason for decisions
- 3) Refer to any relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate
- 4) In the event something has gone wrong, acknowledge this, provide an explanation and set out actions that have been or will be taken to put things right such as change of policy, procedure or practice,
- 5) If a remedy is being proposed, this must reflect the impact experienced by the complainant and have a clear timescale for completion, agreed with the complainant as appropriate.
- 6) When deciding on a remedy for residents, guidance from the Housing Ombudsman will be followed.