



YMCA Blackburn Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

This policy has been created in line with relevant legislation and aims to meet the requirements of the consumer standards for tenant involvement and empowerment through an approach that is clear, simple and accessible. It is compliant with the Complaint Handling Code 2024 and applies to residents, applicants, and third parties affected by YMCA Blackburn's housing services.

- 1.1 YMCA attempts to provide the highest standards of service to its users, residents, applicants, or people requesting information.
- 1.2 It is recognised that there are times when users feel that they have a complaint, and this procedure has been compiled to ensure that complaints are dealt with in speedy, effective, and fair manner.
- 1.3 YMCA recognises the difference between a service request and a complaint and acknowledges that dissatisfaction is best settled quickly and that this is often achieved by early contact with the most appropriate member of staff.
- 1.4 With this in mind, where a resident expresses dissatisfaction, YMCA will determine whether the matter is a service request or a complaint in accordance with the definitions set by the Housing Ombudsman. All staff members remain aware of the complaints procedure and are appropriately informed to be able to pass on the details of the complaint to the appropriate persons.
- 1.5 All service requests or complaints will be addressed according to the individual circumstances of the complaint.

YMCA will follow the Housing Ombudsman Principles for dispute resolution:

- Be fair - treat people fairly and follow fair process
- Put things right
- Learn from outcomes

A complaint is defined by an expression of dissatisfaction with a service delivered:

'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents'

- 1.6 Anyone who feels dissatisfied with the YMCA service is able to make a complaint via our complaints forms located in the communal areas, telephone or email. Consideration of the YMCA's duties to the Equality Act 2010 has been made to allow for both written and verbal communication of complaints, and all reasonable adjustments will be made to support residents to access the complaints procedure. These may include alternative formats, advocacy support, translation services, or adjustments to timescales, for example.

The YMCA will make note of any reasonable adjustments requested and ensure this is in place throughout the process, any disclosed disabilities will also be recorded. Future learning may also be applied where reasonable adjustments have been requested that may not have previously been considered to enable greater access.

Residents may be represented or supported to make a complaint, and they may be accompanied at any meeting. YMCA will ensure that any representative is acting with the resident's consent.

Whenever feedback on a service is requested, details on how to access the complaints policy will always be provided.

Within each service the Service Manager and the Chief Executive Officer of YMCA Blackburn operate as the complaints officers. The Chief Executive Officer of YMCA Blackburn will take on responsibility for liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the appropriate governing bodies.

- 1.7 The Board of YMCA Blackburn has appointed a Trustee as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). The MRC provides assurance to the Board that complaints are handled in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and that learning from complaints is embedded within the organisation.

YMCA Blackburn will promote a culture of learning from complaints. Complaints performance and compliance will be reported to the Board at least annually. This will include an annual self-assessment against the

Complaint Handling Code, analysis of any complaint themes and trends, learning outcomes, and service improvements implemented as a result of complaints.

The annual self-assessment will form the organisation's Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and will be published in accordance with regulatory requirements. YMCA Blackburn will ensure that residents have access to information regarding the type of complaints received and how the charity has learned from complaints to continuously improve services.

2. Complaints by Residents

- 2.1 If a resident is dissatisfied with the level of service that YMCA is providing they are entitled to make a complaint and will be given the choice to make a complaint.
- 2.2 Examples of reasons why a complaint may be made are given below. The list is not meant to cover all possible complaints.
- The YMCA has broken the terms of the occupancy agreement or not performed any obligation contained in it.
 - A repair has not been attended to within the given response times.
 - Staff have not acted in accordance with agreed policies and procedures.
 - A room has not been cleaned properly.
 - Staff have behaved in a non-professional way.
 - Staff have not responded to any reasonable request.
- 2.3 Where a resident raises their dissatisfaction, YMCA will assess whether the matter is a service request or a complaint.

'A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to put something right'

All service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly. A reported issue may be both a service request and a complaint. If dissatisfaction is expressed about:

- the standard of service;

- a delay in responding;
- communication;
- conduct of staff or contractors;
- perceived shortcomings in policy application; or
- a failure to act.

then the matter is also a complaint. The procedure for making a complaint is given below in part 6. Progression of the service request will continue during the complaint process.

- 2.4 Any dissatisfaction expressed through tenant surveys such as the tenant satisfaction measures, will not be addressed as complaints, however residents will be notified of the complaints procedure should they wish to pursue a complaint.

3. Complaints from Applicants

- 3.1 If an applicant feels that they wish to make a complaint about the way their application has been handled, they are entitled to make a complaint.
- 3.2 Examples of reasons why a complaint may be made are given below. The list is not meant to cover all possible complaints.
- An application form being lost.
 - An application not being treated fairly.
 - A delay in processing an application.
 - An applicant being discriminated against for any reason, e.g. sex, race, disability, colour, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnic national origin.
- 3.3 It is suggested that in the first instance, applicants raise their dissatisfaction with the Service Manager. If the Service Manager cannot settle the matter or the applicant wishes to pursue a complaint, the procedure for making a complaint is given below in part 6.

4. Complaints from Others

- 4.1 It is recognised that those who wish to complain to the YMCA may have no direct relationship with it.

4.2 YMCA understands that those people living nearby and persons who simply contact us for information may wish to complain. All complaints received via third parties will be addressed via the landlords' complaints policy. The procedure for making a complaint is given in part 6.

4.3 YMCA seeks to be a good neighbour and to treat those who enquire about its services in a polite and professional manner.

5. Acknowledging a Complaint

5.1 Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint, they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits.

5.2 All expressions of dissatisfaction will be logged and handled as complaints in accordance with this policy. Where a matter is initially raised as a service request and dissatisfaction is subsequently expressed, it will be logged as a complaint from that point. A complaint will not be considered under this policy where YMCA makes a fair and reasonable decision to exclude it because:

- the issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. (Any complaint exceeding this time limit will be considered on its own merits and actioned accordingly, including whether there were barriers or specific circumstances that caused the delay in reporting);
- legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court; or
- matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.

Where a complaint is not logged and handled in accordance with this policy, YMCA will provide a clear explanation in writing and advise the resident of their right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

6. Complaints Procedure

6.1 If a person feels that they wish to make a complaint, they shall raise the matter with the Service Manager, using the complaints form available at reception. The Service Manager shall acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours and arrange a meeting with the complainant.

STAGE 1 Following discussion, if it is determined and agreed with the complainant that the complaint is a complaint and not a service request, the service manager will complete the 'complaints definition'.

This will be completed by service manager ensuring the YMCA's understanding of the complaint and the rectification the complainant is seeking. Following this clarification, the Service Manager will investigate the complaint and provide:

- a decision within 5 days of the commencement of the process; and
- a written response within 10 working days detailing any remedial action.

Where it is not possible to provide a Stage 1 response within 10 working days, YMCA may extend the timescale by up to a further 10 working days. The resident will be informed in writing of the reason for the delay, the revised response date, and their right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

The written response will confirm the decision and any agreed remedial action as soon as these are identified. The response will not be delayed pending completion of any works or corrective action. Where actions remain outstanding, the complainant will be kept informed of progress and timescales until resolution.

If further complaints are raised at this point during the investigation stage, these will also be considered within the same response, if they are related and the response has not yet been issued. If the new issues are not related and a response has already been issued, any further issues will be addressed as a new complaint.

If the Service Manager or appropriate service lead cannot settle the matter to the resident's satisfaction, the person making the complaint may escalate the complaint to **STAGE 2**. While residents are encouraged to explain their reasons for dissatisfaction, this is not required for escalation to be accepted.

STAGE 2 The complaint will be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer or appropriate senior lead who will respond within 5 working days and issue a written response within 10 working days. This will be the landlord's final response.

Where it is not possible to provide a Stage 2 response within 20 working days, the landlord may extend the timescale by up to a further 20 working days. The resident will be informed of the reason for the delay, the revised response date, and their right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

6.2 All members of the complaints officer team will ensure compliance with all obligations set out in this policy. Where a third party is required to undertake a complaints stage, such as an independent adjudicator, this will be undertaken within this complaints process. There will be no requirement to escalate through a further complaints process. At each stage of the complaints process, the complaints officer team will:

- deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;
- give the resident a fair chance to set out their position;
- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and
- consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

Residents have a right to take complaints to the Housing Ombudsman if the above procedures have been exhausted. Residents may contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of the complaint process for advice and guidance.

Once the landlord has issued its final Stage 2 response, the resident may refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman for independent investigation.

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square

London
E14 9GE

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

If YMCA fails to provide any of the services specified in the licence agreement it will refund the element of the charge relating to that service.

7. Confidentiality

All complaints will be dealt with in strict confidence and in accordance the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Information will be processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently and retained in accordance with the YMCA retention policy.

8. Remedies and Compensation

Where a complaint is upheld, YMCA will take appropriate action to put things right. The remedy offered will be intended to reflect the impact on the resident caused by any fault identified, and may include:

- apologising;
- acknowledging where things have gone wrong;
- providing an explanation, assistance, or reasons;
- taking action if there has been delay;
- reconsidering or changing a decision;
- amending a record, adding a correction, or addendum;
- providing a financial remedy; or
- changing policies, procedures, or practices.

9. YMCA Complaints Procedure

We hope that your experience of the YMCA is a positive one, and if you have any concerns, you should ask to speak to a staff member or the Service Manager to resolve the situation. If you feel that the matter is not resolved, we have a complaints procedure, which is designed to help you to address your complaint.

1. If you wish to complain about the YMCA's services, actions, or decisions, including our response to concerns involving another resident, you may raise the matter with the Service Manager by completing the attached form. If you wish, you could make a verbal statement to a member of staff who is obliged to help you to record your statement on the form.
2. **If you are making a complaint**, the Service Manager will **acknowledge your complaint within 24 hours** of **them** receiving the complaint and arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint. In the time leading up to the meeting, your complaint will be investigated by our staff. For example, we may seek witness statements from other parties, monitor CCTV footage, or seek guidance from our policies and procedures (copies of our policies and procedures are available on request).
3. The meeting will be conducted on YMCA premises. In exceptional circumstances, we will consider any reasonable request that the meeting takes place at a neutral venue.
4. **STAGE 1** You will meet the Service Manager, and one other YMCA staff member to discuss the complaint. You may bring along a friend or advocate to the meeting if you wish, but we ask that you let us know in advance if anyone is coming with you. If your complaint is against a particular staff member, they will not be present at the meeting. Within the meeting you will be given advice and support relevant to the complaint.
5. We hope that the matter will be settled in the meeting, if not, the Service Manager will provide you with an outcome within 5 working days and a written response within 10 days.

The response will set out the following –

- The stage the complaint is at.
- A summary of the issues you have raised.

- The landlord's decision on your complaint and its reasoning.
 - Any remedies or to put things right, this may include an apology or compensation.
 - Details of action being undertaken to put things right.
 - Details of how to take your complaint to the next stage if you are unhappy with the outcome.
6. If the matter is settled within this time, we will make a written record of the outcome that is agreed, which both you and the Service Manager will sign.
7. **STAGE 2** If the complaint is not settled to your satisfaction, you should ask for the matter to be passed to the Chief Executive Officer of YMCA Blackburn, who will respond to your complaint within 5 working days and a written response within 10 working days.

If you are requesting an escalation, you are encouraged to set out the following –

- How you are unhappy with the response in stage 1;
 - What you would like the landlord to do to put things right.
8. When the complaint has been dealt with you will be asked to complete an evaluation report on how you felt the complaint was dealt with and the outcome.
9. Residents have a right to take complaints to the Independent Housing Ombudsman, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London E14 9GE if the above procedures have been exhausted. <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/>.
10. If the YMCA fails to provide any of the services specified in the accommodation agreement, it will refund the element of the charge relating to that service.
11. If the landlord determines not to uphold the complaint, clear evidence will be given. Each complaint will be considered on its own merits.