

YMCA THAMES GATEWAY GROUP

SERVING COMMUNITIES IN ESSEX, KENT & LONDON

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**Complaints performance and service
improvement report for landlord services
Covering April 2024- March 2025**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is the second complaints performance and service improvement report for our landlord services that we have produced.

YMCA Thames Gateway (TG) continues to be committed to providing high quality, transparent and accessible services for all sections that community that use our services. We recognise that we can always do better, and encourage our residents to tell us when we have got this wrong, so we can identify issues and introduce positive changes to service delivery.

We want to ensure that our we have good practice and encourage a positive complaint handling culture, and want to resolve disputes as quickly as possible. Three areas of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code were identified in the last self-assessment. These were rectified and a new submission completed in October 2024, confirming compliance with the code.

Since the last report we have introduced two new policies relating to complaints. In September 2024, we introduced a Housing & Ofsted Regulated Supported Accommodation Complaints Policy and in March 2024, a Compensation and Remedies Policy was introduced.

As part of making the complaints policy more accessible for residents, 'Recite Me' software is available on the website and staff make sure residents are aware of this as part of the induction process.

In November, we carried out our first Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey of our residents. Overall satisfaction with our services provided was 71%. There is a specific question in the survey that relates to complaint satisfaction and we scored 64% on this, which is above the sector average. An action plan is in place to improve this score further.

This document sets out YMCA Thames Gateway's annual complaints performance and service improvement report for 2024/2025 in accordance with the requirements set out in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

2.0 COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code became statutory from 1 April 2024. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a legal duty on the Ombudsman to monitor social housing landlord's compliance with the Code.

Key areas of the code include:

- Universal definition of a complaint
- Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Structure of the complaint's procedure - only 2 stages necessary and clear times set out for responses
- Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process

- Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement
- Demonstrating learning in annual reports
- Annual self-assessment against the Code

The Handling Code supports service improvement across all levels of the organisation.

Operational staff - the Code supports excellent complaint handling and engagement with the Ombudsman.

Senior managers – the Code supports learning from complaints and promotes the open and transparent use of information to assess performance and risks.

Board - the Code supports culture setting and intelligence for assurance exercises, using complaint data alongside other management information on stock, services and customer feedback to provide insight into their organisation. It is important for governance to understand the complaints their organisations are receiving and the impact of their complaint handling on residents.

Residents - the Code will act as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord’s internal complaints procedure.

3.0 REPORTING

The code requires us to produce an annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report for submission to the YMCA TG’s Board. The Board are also required to produce a response to this report. Both of these documents should be published on our website within 6 months of our year end. For TG this means by the end of September.

The Operations and Programmes committee receive detailed quarterly complaints reports from the Complaints Officer and provide scrutiny and challenge on behalf of the Board. This committee also produce the response to the annual Performance and Service improvement report.

The Board receive complaints monitoring data as part of the regular performance reporting information that they receive. Any risks identified, are reported to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

4.0 SELF-ASSESSMENT

There is a requirement that landlords self-assess against the Code. YMCA TG has less than 1,000 properties.

This self-assessment forms part of this annual complaint’s performance and service improvement report (Appendix 1). The report does not need to be submitted to the Ombudsman, however, a link to it on the website should be included in the self-assessment.

Non-compliance could result in the Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders.

Compliance with the Code

The Annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code has been completed for 2024/25.

No areas of non-compliance were identified. A new Housing & Ofsted Regulated Supported Accommodation Complaints Policy was introduced in September 2024. This made us compliant with the code and strengthened several other areas identified. A new Compensation and Remedies Policy was also introduced in March 2025 which set out our approach to awarding compensation.

5.0 Complaint Handling Analysis

The Head of Housing continues to be the Complaints Officer for the organisation. As part of Compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards, a Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey (TSM) was carried out in November 2024. One of the questions asked relates to residents who have made a complaint in the last 12 months and asks ‘How satisfied were you with the complaints handling?’

Relevant TSM scores below:



Number of landlord related complaints opened

| | Stage 1 | Within timescale | Stage 2 | Within timescale | Housing Ombudsman |
|-------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|
| 23/24 | 19 | 53% | 1 | 100% | 0 |
| 24/25 | 44 | 86% | 6 | 71% | 2 |

In total, 44 landlord related complaints were received throughout the year. This is slightly more than double the amount received in the previous year. This is down to:

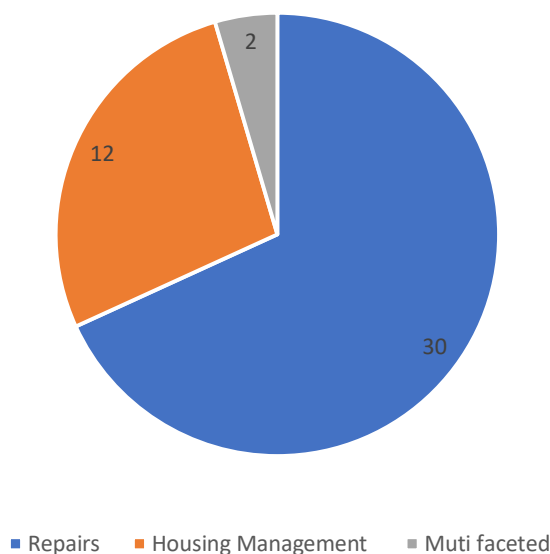
- Increased awareness of the complaints policy and procedure
- Delays in getting repairs completed. Some of these delays were caused by challenges with recruitment for trade operatives and sourcing appropriate contractors.

All complaints were accepted for investigation and none were refused. Performance in relation to handling complaints within Code timescales improved for Stage 1 with 86% of complaints responded to within timescale compared to 53% the previous year. 90% of complaints were acknowledged within timescale.

Subject of landlord related complaints

The subject of complaints is shown in the pie chart below:

Breakdown of complaints by theme



The largest area of complaints was about repairs and was primarily about the length of time that it was taking to get repairs completed. In line with The Complaints Handling code, this risk was raised in a report to Finance, Audit & Risk committee so the Board were aware and can take action.

Escalations

There were six escalations to final stage of the complaint process. These related as follows:

- Four were to do with delays in repairs, one was for a request for a decant whilst a repair and one was related to staff behaviour where a maintenance operative went into a resident’s flat without permission to complete a repair

- Two complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman. One was not accepted as being within their jurisdiction as it related to Wi-Fi connectivity. The other one was accepted and related to a decant in a repairs case. We have supplied the requested information to them and are awaiting the outcome of their investigation.

There has been no annual report about YMCA TG’s performance from the Ombudsman.

There have been no findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman.

Service improvements as a result of learning from complaints

Learning from complaints is an important element of a positive complaint handling culture. It is important to understand where and why things have gone wrong and how to make sure the same thing does not happen again.

A number of service improvements have been identified both from data analysis and also from direct feedback from residents obtained during the complaint investigation and resolution process. New Housing Complaints Policy was introduced in September 2024 and a Compensation and Remedies Policy was introduced in March 2025.

The table below sets out the service improvements identified.

| Learning | Resolution |
|--|---|
| Delays to repairs | Sourcing a wider range of approved contractors |
| Accessing residents’ homes to complete repairs | Refresher training for Property Service staff on protocol for entering residents’ homes. |
| Awards of compensation were inconsistent | Compensation and Remedies Policy in place |
| Where a complaint contained multiple service failures and financial redress was made through the award of compensation, complaint responses only included the total amount awarded | Where an award of compensation is made, the complaint response should list the amount awarded for each service failure |
| Some complaints contained several issues that would be resolved over a period of time | One resident had multiple issues outstanding and an action plan was developed and timescales for completion agreed with them. This plan was then shared with the resident and updated regularly. This approach has been implemented where there are several issues to resolve |
| In some instances, there was a lack of updates to residents and local staff did not always have up to date information about when repairs would be completed | Weekly site-specific repairs meetings take place at each site between Property Services and Housing teams. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>It's important a consistent response is provided when there is an out of hours repairs call</p> | <p>Refresher training provided for out-of-hours team on correct process to follow on out-of-hours repair requests</p> <p>A Night Manger is now in post and any out of hours queries are escalated if staff are unsure</p> |
|--|---|

6.0 SUMMARY

This is the second Complaints Performance and Service Improvement review report that has been produced at YMCA TG.

We are compliant with The Complaints Handling Code.

The number of complaints and escalations has increased since last year. The number responded within timescale has improved.

Key lessons learned include; consistent decision making on awards of compensation, action plans in place where multiple issues to resolve and improved out of hours response.

Accessibility of the Complaints Policy has been be enhanced through the introduction of 'Recite Me' software, which will enable translations in different languages as well as other accessibility tools through our website.