

Housing & Ofsted Regulated Supported Accommodation Complaints Policy

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Amendment Record

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3. Purpose

3.1 Overview

At YMCA Thames Gateway (TG), we want to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a consistent and transparent way. This policy sets out our approach for receiving and handling complaints.

We are committed to providing a high quality, and accessible service but know that we don't always get things right. This policy outlines what our residents can do to let us know when they think something has gone wrong, and what they can expect from us in response.

We view complaints as a valuable source of feedback and learning for our services, helping to drive improvement and maintain a positive relationship with our residents.

4. Scope and Compliance

4.1 Scope

This policy applies to all complaints about our landlord services and our Ofsted registered Supported Accommodation, received from residents and other customers (including prospective residents), and third parties making a complaint on their behalf. This policy also applies to complaints from MPs and local councillors on behalf of their constituents.

The policy does not apply to complaints about our non-landlord services, such as children's services, health & wellbeing services.

4.2 Compliance

The Head of Housing acts as the 'complaints officer' for complaints about TG's landlord services and Head of Young Futures Service fulfils the role for the Ofsted registered supported accommodation.

A Board member fulfils the role of 'Member Responsible for Complaints'.

5. Definitions

- 5.1 Complaint:** an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the YMCA TG, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.
- 5.2 Service Request:** A request from a resident to us requiring action to be taken to put something right. These will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.
- 5.3 Housing Ombudsman Service:** An independent external body which investigates complaints against Registered Providers. The Housing Ombudsman can only investigate complaints that fall within its remit
- 5.4 Regulator of Social Housing:** An independent external body with statutory powers to monitor, investigate and enforce regulatory compliance against Registered Providers.
- 5.5 Registered Provider:** A social landlord registered with the Regulator of Social Housing. YMCA Thames Gateway is a Registered Provider.
- 5.6 Ofsted:** An independent external body with statutory powers to monitor, investigate and enforce regulatory compliance in supported accommodation that houses 16 and 17 year olds.

6 Principles

6.1 Our standards for handling complaints:

- A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction about our landlord services, we will give the choice to make a complaint.
- Residents can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. In return, we expect that residents will treat our staff dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.
- Complaints will be treated in confidence.
- We will not treat anyone less favourably than anyone else because of their Sex, legal marital or same-sex partnership status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender, sexual orientation, colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality, disability, religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation.

- We will not stop our efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.
- If we decide not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.

6.2 The Complaint Handling process:

We have a two-stage complaint process. The table below sets out our timescales for responding to complaints:

Complaint	Action	Timescale
Stage 1	Acknowledge and log the Complaint.	Within five working days
	We provide a response to the stage 1 Complaint.	Within 10 working days of the stage 1 complaint being logged
Stage 2	Acknowledge and log the Complaint at stage 2.	Within five working days
	We provide a response to the stage 2 review.	Within 20 working days of a complaint being escalated

Stage 1: initial complaint

When a complaint is made, we acknowledge and log it within five working days. We carry out a non-biased investigation and share a comprehensive answer within 10 working days of the complaint being logged.

Where we're unable to respond to a stage 1 complaint within 10 working days, we will agree any extension with the person raising the complaint. We will then respond within 20 working days, providing regular updates.

Stage 2: complaint escalation

If a resident is not happy with the way we've dealt with a complaint or our decision at stage 1, they should let us know within 20 working days of the stage 1 decision if they wish to move to stage 2.

We accept a request to escalate the complaint to the next stage unless an exclusion applies (see section 4)

We do not add new information on the complaint at stage 2. New information may be treated as a new complaint.

When a complaint is escalated, we acknowledge and log it within five working days.

We will provide a response to complaints escalated to stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Where we are unable to respond to a stage 2 complaint within this time, we agree an extension with the person raising the complaint. We will respond within 20 working days, providing regular updates.

If the resident is unhappy once the complaints process has been exhausted, we signpost them to the Housing Ombudsman Service or Ofsted, whichever is appropriate.

6.3 Accessibility & Awareness

We to make it easy for residents to complain and have a range of different channels through which they can make a complaint. Complaints can be received face to face, by letter, email or through the website.

Residents are able to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the us

Support can be provided to any individual who feel they want to make a complaint but unable to do so using these routes.

This policy, including information about the Ombudsman and the Complaint Handling Code will be publicised on the website, and discussed at resident forums. Residents are made aware of the complaints process and this policy during as part of their induction.

6.4 Housing Ombudsman Service

A complaint can be raised with the Housing Ombudsman Service at any stage of the process for an independent review of the case.

The Housing Ombudsman service can be contacted in the following ways:

- Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents
- Telephone: 0300 111 3000
- Email: info@housingombudsman.org.uk
- In writing to:

Housing Ombudsman Service PO Box 152
Liverpool L33 7WQ

6.5 Ofsted

A complaint can be raised with Ofsted at any stage of the process.

Ofsted can be contacted in the following ways:

- Telephone: 0300 123 1231
- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

6.6 What this policy covers

Residents can complain about our standard of service, actions, or lack of action by us or anyone working for us (such as contractors).

6.7 This policy does not cover:

There are some things that we will not deal with through this policy.

- A first-time resident enquiry; it's important that TG has an opportunity to provide a response or resolve the issue.
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.
- Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy, unless there are ongoing issues related to the complaint – e.g. Damp or Mould.
- Neighbour disputes
- Reports of anti-social behaviour, unless residents are unhappy with our response to these.
- Matters already being dealt with at determination stage by the Ombudsman Service.
- Liability or personal injury claims.
- Where we are advised that legal proceedings have been issued (this is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court) we will close the complaint explaining the reason.
- If the complaint is disputing the service charge we have set, residents may resolve the dispute either directly with TG or through the First Tier Tribunal. However, this does not prevent customers raising their complaint with the Housing Ombudsman.
- Anonymous complaints. However, we will record these to help us to improve our services. If the complaint raises a safeguarding or a whistleblowing issue, this will be dealt with under the relevant policy.
- Survey feedback is not treated as a complaint, though the survey will include information so the person completing the survey can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.
- Feedback about our policies and procedures from customers or other parties will be recorded and form part of future reviews.

7. Policy Instruments

7.1 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>

7.2 Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Standards: Transparency, Influence and Accountability.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transparency-influence-and-accountability-standard>

7.3 Guide to the Supported Accommodation Regulations including Quality Standards

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6514400088281e000db4e965/Guide_to_the_supported_accommodation_regulations_including_quality_standards.pdf

8. Duties

All staff have responsibility to treat anyone making a complaint with courtesy, respect and fairness by providing appropriate information about our complaint process and where necessary assist with making a record of complaints received via our central reporting system.

Team Leaders are responsible for responding to and resolving Stage One complaints within the timescales laid out within this policy.

Heads of Housing are responsible for resolving complaints that escalate to Stage Two.