

The YMCA logo is rendered in a bold, dark grey, blocky font. It is positioned at the top center of the page, set against a background of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various colors including pink, yellow, green, and blue.

YMCA

**COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS &
SUGGESTIONS POLICY**

**Effective from:
1 December 2020**



COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS & SUGGESTIONS POLICY

APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

YMCA is committed to ensuring that there are effective means to review, respond and act on compliments, complaints and suggestions in relation to its service delivery. The Policy applies to all legal entities within the Group.

OBJECTIVE

1. We are committed to providing services that meet the standards agreed with customers (including residents, service users, young people and stakeholders). Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to address situations where we do or do not meet expectations and need to understand, learn and identify how we can improve our service.
2. We will attempt to resolve expressions of dissatisfaction within 24 hours and therefore encourage customers to talk to or contact staff as soon as a problem arises. Where we can, we will seek to avoid matters escalating by simply understanding and putting in place simple remedies. If we fail to resolve an expression of dissatisfaction and the customer wishes to pursue the matter, it will then become a formal complaint.

POLICY STATEMENT

3. The aims of the Policy are to:
 - a) Ensure customers have open and fair access to the complaints process
 - b) Manage complaints effectively and efficiently
 - c) Operate a prompt, fair complaint escalation and review process
3. As an integral part of the review process we will engage with customers in the review of this Policy.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4. We are committed to treating everyone fairly, recognising the protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Legislation. We will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and communities and will take positive action where appropriate.
5. We make appropriate arrangements where necessary to ensure that customers with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected. This could involve providing communications in alternative languages or formats or providing interpretative or transcription assistance where appropriate.

DEFINITIONS

6. Customer: Refers to all service users whether they be residents in our accommodation, young people in our clubs, children or family members who use our facilities or members of the community who hire a room or use the gyms, cafes, etc.
7. Expression of dissatisfaction: A customer may express dissatisfaction with an aspect of our service.
8. Suggestion: We recognise that sometimes an expression of dissatisfaction is not a complaint but rather a suggestion as to how we can improve our service. We will actively encourage people to make suggestions for improvement. This includes:
 - a) Talking to customers while they are on the premises
 - b) Monitoring social media and online forums

- c) Asking employees about customer feedback
 - d) Reading online reviews by customers
 - e) Customer feedback surveys and suggestion forms
 - f) Mystery Shopping
9. We recognise that suggestions may be things that take longer time to respond to (as they may include suggestions a significant change to service or property standards). As such we will respond to all suggestions, but this response will be on a more bespoke timeline. From time to time we will publish "you said, we did" information in our various sites and services in order to demonstrate how customers comments have been taken on board
10. Compliment: We also want our customers to celebrate when things go well and where we have exceeded their expectations. By encouraging compliments, we can identify things that are important to our customers as well as nurture and praise high quality service standards. Where a compliment is raised we will share that with the relevant team as well as acknowledge and thank the person who made the compliment within 48 hours.
11. Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Charity, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual customer or group of customers. Where dissatisfaction is expressed about a service and we have been unable to remedy the situation to the customer's satisfaction, the customer chooses to formalise the matter, a complaint must be lodged within 6 months of the occurrence which is being complained about.
12. A complaint may be made by a current or former customer, a prospective customer, a third party affected by our actions, or an MP, Councillor or third party acting on their behalf with their permission. Compliments, Complaints and suggestions may also be raised via our different social media platforms.

REPORTING AND MONITORING

13. We will use complaints as an opportunity to learn and implement remedies to prevent future reoccurrences where appropriate. When closed, complaints will be analysed to:
- a) Assess whether the service standards set out in this policy have been met
 - b) Assess quality of response to complaints
 - c) Assess that appropriate action has been taken within reasonable response times
 - d) Assess whether the policy has been applied fairly and consistently
 - e) Identify any lessons to be learnt
 - f) Decide on any necessary communication to staff and customers
 - g) Identify any required amendments to procedures
 - h) Report on the number of complaints deemed vexatious or repetitive
14. We will routinely monitor our performance in implementing this policy and report outcomes to the Board and Executive Team.
15. The Performance Committee will consider the impact of very serious complaints on the risk register and report to the Trustee Board.



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16. We will conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys and 'mystery shopper' surveys that will enable customers and the Association to provide feedback on complaints handling to ensure that customers feel able to complain and are confident that their complaint will be dealt with in a positive manner.
17. The Performance Committee will review this Policy every year to ensure it is effective and complies with current legislation and good practice. Any changes that are required will be progressed as necessary.

PROCEDURE

18. Exclusions: The following type of complaints cannot be pursued through the Complaints process where the issue:
 - a) Has already been raised through our complaints process
 - b) Is, has or may be handled under an appeals process (lettings)
 - c) Is, has or should be handled through legal action
 - d) Is an initial notification or request for service or information
 - e) Is an initial report of anti-social behaviour
 - f) Is an internal staff or volunteer complaint (which should instead be treated in line with the grievance or whistleblowing policies)
 - g) Is raised anonymously or without any means of speaking to the complainant in order to substantiate their complaint

MAKING A COMPLAINT

19. A complaint can be raised in the following ways:
 - a) Completing a complaint form and handing it in at a reception in one of the YMCA SPG sites
 - b) By email to complaints@ymcaspg.org
 - c) By letter to the Complaints Officer, YMCA St Paul's Group, St James House, 9-15 St James Road, Surbiton, KT6 4QH
 - d) Completing the complaint form on the YMCA St Paul's Group website
 - e) Verbally to a member of staff who will support the complainant to complete a complaint form
 - f) Via social media platforms
20. A summary, step by step guide to the complaints policy will be made available in plain English in key points around our sites and on our website. Where a customer might require assistance in completing a form, assistance can be provided by a member of staff or by a third party such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.
21. A summary of this policy and a full copy will be made available on our website
22. Where the complaint concerns a Safeguarding issue relating to people in the care of YMCA, then YMCA's Safeguarding Policy will apply.
23. The officer reviewing the complaint will also consider whether the seriousness of the matter triggers any regulatory reporting requirements. If there are any questions over the most appropriate steps to take, then the advice of the Company Secretary will be sought.

EXCEPTIONAL VARIATION

24. A tiny minority of customers may account for a disproportionately high volume of complaints, diverting significant time and resource away from other customers.
Where a



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complaint is deemed to be vexatious, we may vary our complaints process for these customers in a manner specific and proportionate to the circumstances. We will ensure that exceptional variation is only made with the agreement of a relevant Director, is communicated to the customer clearly in writing, and is reviewed every six months to ensure it remains appropriate.

SERVICE USER OR EXTERNAL COMPLAINT ABOUT A BOARD / COMMITTEE MEMBER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OR EXECUTIVE TEAM MEMBER

25. Where a service user or external complaint is received about the behaviour of a Board / Committee member, Chief Executive or Executive Team member, the investigation will be commissioned by the People & Governance Committee. In commissioning this work, the Committee may choose to bring in an independent person to carry out the investigation if they consider it necessary to do so. Where the complaint is about a member of the People & Governance Committee, then the Chair of Trustees will work with the Company Secretary and Chief Executive to commission an investigation.
26. For the avoidance of doubt, this Complaints Policy is for service users or external complaints. For any internal matters relating to employment, volunteering or contracting concerns, then they should be raised under the Grievance Procedure.

DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SHARING

27. We will share relevant information with appropriate agencies in line with Data Protection Legislation that governs when and how we can share personal information.

STAFF TRAINING

28. We will use anonymised complaints to support staff with training in delivering the Complaints Policy.

STAGES OF COMPLAINT

Stage 1: Complaint

29. A complaint will first be investigated at stage one of the complaints procedure. There may be exceptional circumstances where a complaint will proceed straight to stage two, such as if the complaint involves a member of local management team, or if the complaint is particularly serious in nature. In all matters, YMCA will progress a complaint in a fair and transparent manner; within:
 30. Within **5 working days** we will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide an indication of when a substantive response to the complaint might be given
 31. After acknowledging the complaint (above) we will contact the complainant (where appropriate) to arrange to meet and review the complaint and gather further information. We will also meet with members of staff and stakeholders as necessary to agree a response
 32. After arranging to meet the complainant (or acknowledging the complaint if no meeting is proposed) we will write to the complainant setting out our findings and if necessary, offering resolution. We will respond with a decision **within 10 working days** from receipt of the complaint. If this time limit cannot be met, we will write to the complainant within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date (which should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason).

33. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, they will have 2 weeks in which to appeal. The procedure for making an appeal will be set-out in the complaint response and an appeal must be made within 2 weeks. If no appeal is forthcoming, then the complaint will be considered to be closed.

Stage 2: Appeal Against Decision

34. If the customer is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 of the procedure, or feels that the procedure has not been followed, the next stage is to ask for a review of the decision.
35. Grounds for appeal are:
- Any aspect of their complaint has not been upheld
 - They are not satisfied with the method of redress (e.g. the action taken in response to a complaint)
36. A review of the decision will be taken by a member of the Senior Management Team or other appointed person who is not involved in the original decision. Where the complaint is about the Chief Executive, an Executive Director or Trustee, then this appeal stage will be coordinated by the People & Governance Committee or Chair of the Board as is necessary and appropriate in the circumstances.
37. We will respond with a decision **within 20 working days** from receipt of the request to escalate/ appeal. If this time limit cannot be met, we will write to the complainant within 20 working days of receiving the escalation, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date (which should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason).

Designated Person

38. If we are unable to resolve a housing complaint through our complaints procedure the complainant can contact a designated person who can also help find a solution. The designated person can be an MP, a local councillor or a Tenant Panel. Their role is to help resolve disputes between tenants and their landlords which they can do in whatever way they think is most likely to work.

Housing Ombudsman

39. Where the complaint relates to regulated housing services then complaints may be passed directly to the Ombudsman if:
- The complaint has passed through all the internal procedures for considering complaints against the landlord; and
 - The complaint is passed on to the ombudsman after eight weeks from the day the internal procedures were exhausted.
 - Complaints can also be escalated to the Ombudsman via a designated person (see above) within eight weeks from the day the internal procedures were exhausted.

They can be contacted at:

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/>



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Ofsted

40. As above, any parent/carer at any time can submit a complaint to Ofsted about any aspect of registered childcare provision. Ofsted will consider and investigate all complaints received. They can be contacted at:
OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231 www.ofsted.gov.uk

CQC regulated services

41. For the CQC regulated work at the YMCA Care Homes once all internal procedures have been exhausted then a complaint should be made to Adult Social Care Department of Surrey County Council (who fund the places at the homes). They can be contacted at:
Surrey County Council
Phone: 0300 200 1005 Email: contactcentre.adults@surreycc.gov.uk
<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/your-council/complaints-comments-and-compliments/all-other-council-services/how-to-make-a-complaint>

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

42. The Executive Directors will be responsible for responding to complaints in their areas of responsibility.
43. The Head of Business Improvement will produce i) an annual complaints report to the Performance Committee and Board and ii) a quarterly compliments, complaints & suggestions tracker to the Performance Committee.
44. The Executive Assistant to the Group Director of Operations will hold the Complaints Officer designation for the purposes of the Housing Ombudsman Code.
45. The Company Secretary is responsible for liaising with the various nominated individuals, the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Board about reporting complaints to Regulators