

POLICY | Complaints

1. Values

YMCA Cheltenhamⁱ adheres to a set of Values that it seeks to apply to all areas of its work.

The organisation believes our Values should frame all internal and external interactions and well as fully inform our policies and processes.

As an organisation founded on the Christian Faith, YMCA Cheltenham draws its Values from the Bible, principally as described in Micah 6:8¹.

Our Values are therefore expressed as follows:

- ❖ YMCA Cheltenham will **operate** with Equity, Integrity, Openness and Honesty.
- ❖ YMCA Cheltenham will **engage** with Empathy, Kindness, Generosity & Grace.
- ❖ YMCA Cheltenham will **be** Thoughtful, Discrete, Ethical and Respectful to all.

2. Introduction and Definition

YMCA Cheltenham is committed to providing a quality service for its residents, service-users and members while working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all our stakeholders.

One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding positively to peoples' views and complaints.

YMCA Cheltenham does not perceive a complaint received as undue criticism, but as an opportunity for organisational learning and development.

A complaint is defined as:

"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."

YMCA Cheltenham recognises the difference between a service request and a complaint. A service request is a request from a resident to YMCA Cheltenham, the landlord, requiring action to be taken to put something right. The organisation understands that service requests are not complaints and service requests will be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.

Should a resident express dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, a complaint can be raised, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.

¹ MICAH 6:8 READS: "... what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers 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.

3. Principles

YMCA Cheltenham commits to the following principles:

- The Complaints Policy is available on the YMCA Cheltenham website.
- Making a complaint is easy to do, whether face to face, in writing, telephone or email (if a complaint is emailed or written, then ideally the YMCA Cheltenham Complaints Form is completed and returned to YMCA Cheltenham for acknowledgement and investigation – see contacts at the end of this document).
- The Policy is clearly referred to as part of any induction to the organisation.
- As all complaints are an expression of dissatisfaction with our service, we will aim to respond as per the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code 2024 and also apply the same methodology to cover all none housing related complaints.
- Complaints will be dealt with appropriately, sensitively and in confidence.
- Within the timely response, the complainant can be assured of an investigation and explanation, as well as information on how we propose to put things right (if appropriate) and, by acknowledging when things have gone wrong, an explanation and reasons for it, what we intend to do to make improvements and remedies to make good; reflecting on the severity and impact on the complainant, which may result in an apology from the organisation, changes in policy or additional resources to manage a specific situation. Any remedies offered will be clearly defined with reasonable timescales attached for completion, be fair and outcome focused, aim to put things right and allow opportunity for learning.
- Complaints are seen as a way of addressing shortfalls in the quality of our service and, when upheld, will be developed into an opportunity for organisational learning and to continuously improve what we do.
- All service complaints will be noted and recorded centrally by the organisation.
- YMCA Cheltenham will carry out a self-assessment against Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures. If YMCA Cheltenham is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, the organisation will inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on the organisation’s website; YMCA Cheltenham will provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.

4. Dealing with your complaint

YMCA Cheltenham appreciates the importance of listening and dealing with a complaint within a reasonable amount of time. Our aim is to resolve complaints quickly and efficiently but realising that some issues may take longer to resolve due to the nature of the complaint and any subsequent investigation. If this is the case then the complainant will be advised and updated with any relevant facts.

YMCA Cheltenham's Head of Housing, Policy and Performance (Complaints Officer) is responsible for management and oversight of complaints received by the organisation, liaison with investigation leads and with external organisations (as detailed in Section 6 of this policy) and the reporting of complaints to YMCA Cheltenham's Policy & Governance Committee (Member Responsible for Complaints, the MRC). The Complaints Officer will assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.

YMCA Cheltenham will give a resident the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the organisation.

YMCA Cheltenham will make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. The organisation will keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident may disclose. Any agreed reasonable adjustments will be kept under active review.

5. Limitations

While YMCA Cheltenham will always take complaints seriously, it is reasonable that there are acceptable exclusions and limitations are placed upon the timing of complaints and responses to complaint outcomes.

Acceptable exclusions include:

- 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.
- Matters that have previously been considered under the Complaints policy.
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago

The following limitations are applicable to all complaints and responses to complaint outcomes.

6. Service standards

When in receipt of a complaint YMCA Cheltenham will adhere to the following standards:

- All complaints will be acknowledged, defined and logged within specific timescales as recorded in the table below.
- Listen and take onboard the nature of the complaint.
- Where necessary and appropriate, keep information confidential.

- Agree and keep the complainant informed/updated with progress of their complaint.
- Advise the complainant of the various escalation stages if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome and response.
- All complaints escalated to Stage 2 and subsequently investigated will be reported to the Chief Executive Officer who will review the complaint outcome with the Lead Person before responding to the complainant.

COMPLAINT ESCALATION STAGES	LEAD PERSON FOR MANAGING COMPLAINT	EXPECTED TIMESCALE (exceptions will be relayed to complainant*)
<p>STAGE 1</p>	<p>The person responsible for the service area that you are complaining about, e.g.</p> <p>A key worker would respond to a resident, or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The instructor/coach would respond to a Sports Centre Member, or - The service worker would respond to a service user of Family Space, the Contact Centre or Pre-school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledge, define and log within 5 working days. - Landlord to send response to complainant within 10 working days from the date the complaint was originally acknowledged. - Extensions to stage 1 responses must be no more than 10 working days & without good reason. <p>The following will be confirmed in writing to the resident at the completion of this stage in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the complaint stage; - the complaint definition; - the decision on the complaint; - the reasons for any decisions made; - the details of any remedy offered to put things right; - details of any outstanding actions; and - details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.
<p>STAGE 2</p>	<p>The Manager responsible for the service area that you are complaining about, e.g.</p> <p>Housing Manager, or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sports Centre Manager, or - Family Space Manager, or - Contact Centre Manager, or - Pre-school Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledge, define and log within 5 working days of receiving the request to escalate to stage 2. - Landlord to send response to complainant within 20 working days of receiving the stage 2 request. - Extensions to stage 2 responses must be no more than 20 working days & without good reason. <p>The following will be confirmed in writing to the resident at the completion of this stage in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the complaint stage; - the complaint definition; - the decision on the complaint; - the reasons for any decisions made; - the details of any remedy offered to put things right; - details of any outstanding actions; and - details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman if the complainant is not satisfied with the response.

***Extension to Expected Timescales:** Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, YMCA Cheltenham will mutually agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint. When YMCA Cheltenham informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, the resident will be provided with the reason why and contact details of the Housing Ombudsman.

Where residents raise additional complaints during an investigation, these will be incorporated into the stage 1 response, if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been issued.

Where the stage 1 response has been issued already, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues will be logged as a new complaint.

In all cases, escalation will require a more senior person than that of the previous stage to investigate and resolve the complaint.

FOR HOUSING SERVICES – THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>

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

FOR CHILD CONTACT CENTRE SERVICES - THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CONTACT CENTRES (NACCC)

<https://naccc.org.uk/for-parents/making-a-complaint/>

FOR OTHER CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES – THE CHARITY COMMISSION

<https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/>

FOR FUNDRAISING COMPLAINTS – THE FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints>

FOR ADVERTISING COMPLAINTS – THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS AUTHORITY

<https://www.asa.org.uk/make-a-complaint.html>

7. Persistent, unreasonable, vexatious and serial complainers

On occasions, a complaint may have been satisfactorily resolved and progressed through all escalation processes, but the complainant may continue to complain in a manner that may, at this stage, be considered unreasonable or vexatious.

On these rare occasions the matter in question will be considered seriously and referred to the Chief Executive Officer. This may result in YMCA Cheltenham being unable to assist

any further in the complaint raised. In view of such a decision the original complaint would remain closed with no further action being taken. This will be communicated to the complainant.

9. Contacting YMCA Cheltenham

YMCA Cheltenham can be contacted by:

- Speaking to a member of staff at YMCA Cheltenham
- Telephone 01242 524024
- Email admin@cheltenhamymca.com
- In writing to:

Complaints & Compliments
Head of Housing, Policy and Performance (Complaints Officer)
YMCA Cheltenham
6 Victoria Walk
Cheltenham
GL50 1TP

Date of Last Review:	2 nd January 2025
Date of Next Review:	2 nd January 2027

ⁱ Note: Note: "YMCA Cheltenham" is the brand name of Cheltenham YMCA. Cheltenham YMCA is a registered Charity in England, Charity No. 1079951 and a Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in England No. 3930834 with a Registered Office at 6 Vittoria Walk, Cheltenham, GL50 1TP, UK. Cheltenham YMCA is a private registered provider of social housing in England PRP No. H4270.