

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 YMCA Black Country Group recognises the importance of customer feedback and welcomes compliments, comments and complaints about its services. YMCA Black Country Group is committed to using the information it receives to help drive forward improvements. This procedure outlines the aims of the YMCA Black Country Group in dealing with compliments, comments and complaints made by YMCA customers
- 1.2 It is important that this procedure is followed so that the Association can be confident that all compliments, comments or complaints are dealt with in the appropriate manner.

2 Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this procedure is to inform staff of the process to adopt when dealing with Compliments, Comments & Complaints.
- 2.2 The procedure should be followed when dealing with a compliment, comment or complaint made by a customer, visitor or in some instances an employee.
- 2.3 This Policy applies to all YMCA Black Country Group members including its subsidiaries and associated companies.
- 2.4 This Policy is to be read in conjunction with YMCCABCG's:
 - a) Data Protection Policy;
 - b) Staff Handbook;

3 Trauma-Informed Practice

- 3.1 Trauma-informed practice is an approach to interventions which is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development. Trauma-informed practice aims to increase practitioners' awareness of how trauma can negatively impact on individuals and communities, and their ability to feel safe or develop trusting relationships with housing services and their staff.
- 3.2 It aims to improve the accessibility and quality of services by creating culturally sensitive, safe services that people trust and want to use. It seeks to prepare practitioners to work in collaboration and partnership with people and empower them to make choices about their health and wellbeing. Trauma-informed practice acknowledges the need to see beyond an individual's presenting behaviors and actions and to ask, 'What does this person need?' rather than 'What is wrong with this person?' – 'How can we support this person to feel safe.'
- 3.3 In all interactions with staff and service users therefore, and in the implementation of this policy when dealing with Compliments, Comments and Complaints; we shall be required to embody the principles of Trauma-informed practice.

4 Definitions

4.1 Compliment or Comment

It is good to know when we have done something well or when our services are meeting the needs of our customers and being delivered effectively. A comment or compliment can be: -

- a) What customers think about our services and policies,
- b) Ideas on how we can improve our services,
- c) Informing us of their satisfaction with a service, activity or a particular member of staff.

4.2 Complaints

A complaint is 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, or customer or group of customers, in particular:

- a) Customers think we have not done something we should have done,
- b) The Association has done something badly or in the wrong way,
- c) Customers think they have been treated unfairly or impolitely.

4.3 Service Requests (Housing Specific)

A service request is a request from a resident to YMCA requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must be recorded, monitored, and reviewed regularly.

5 Roles & Responsibility

5.1 Board of Directors

- a) Receive and monitor half-yearly Compliments, Comments & Complaints Report.
- b) Respond to communications made to the Chair once the above has been exhausted.
- c) Appoint a member of the Governing Body (the Member Responsible for Complaints, MRC) to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture.

5.2 Governance Committee

- a) Review the quarterly report as presented by the Chief Finance Officer.
- b) Instruct Chief Officers to provide ad hoc reports / additional information as required.

5.3 Chief Finance Officer (for the purpose of this policy the 'Complaints Officer')

- a) Log and file all compliments, comments and complaints and the responses (supported by CEO PA), together with a RAG rating for each entry.
- b) Report to the Chief Officers on a quarterly basis of all compliments, comments and complaints received.
- c) Report to the Governance Committee as part of the Corporate Quarterly KPIs a summary of all compliments, comments and complaints received.
- d) Provide monthly feedback to the Senior Leadership Team as appropriate.
- e) Take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the relevant governing body.

5.4 Chief Operating Officers

- a) Notify the Chief Executive Officer within a reasonable timeframe of and serious complaints received from third parties, including commissioners, local authority and stakeholders
- b) Analyse all forms and put in place actions to improve the service if necessary.
- c) Produce an Action Plan if required for consideration by the Senior Leadership Team.
- d) Monitor the progress of all compliments, comments and complaints for their areas to ensure they have been responded to in accordance with the Policy and in line with the specified timeframes.
- e) Chief Operating Officers may respond to Appeals.

5.5 Executive Heads and Heads of Service

- a) Advise the Chief Operating Officer for the project **immediately** of any complaint from third parties, including commissioners, local authority and stakeholders.
- b) Ensure all compliments, comments and complaints are responded to in accordance with the Policy and in line with the specified timeframes.
- c) Executive Heads and Heads of Service may respond to Appeals.

5.6 Departmental / Project Managers

- a) Deal with all compliments, comments and complaints in accordance with the Policy.
- b) Advise their Executive Head / Head of Service of any complaint, comment or compliment received by the project.
- c) Advise their Executive Head / Head of Service **and** Chief Officer **immediately** of any complaint from third parties, including commissioners, local authority and stakeholders.

6 Dealing with compliments

- 6.1 When we receive a compliment, we will: -
- a) Record the compliment and pass it on to the relevant member of staff and the appropriate manager.
 - b) If the compliment is made orally we will thank the person orally although we may wish to consider thanking them in writing as well where appropriate.
 - c) If the compliment is made in writing, we will write and thank the person for their comments within 7 working days.

7 Dealing with comments

- 7.1 When we receive a comment, we will: -
- a) If made orally we will respond orally to the comment and consider whether we should also respond in writing.
 - b) If made in writing, we will reply within 7 working days stating if we decide to make a change as a result of the comments.
 - c) If we have got things wrong, we will apologise.

8 Dealing with complaints

- 8.1 Complaints may be received orally and can be responded to at the time orally as long as any outcome is satisfactory to the complainant.
- 8.2 Complaints can be made in any way and with any member of staff. When staff receive an oral complaint, consideration needs to be given to whether this should be dealt with more formally and if so, whether the complainant needs assistance to put it in writing.
- 8.3 We will accept complaints within 12 months of the issue occurring or the complainant becoming aware of the issue, unless there are reasons for this time frame to be extended. Extensions to this time frame will be dealt with on a case by case basis and the Chief Finance Officer will ultimately decide if a complaint should be heard.
- 8.4 We will ensure we:
- a) have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments;
 - b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and
 - c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.
- 8.5 When receiving an oral complaint, staff will:
- a) Discuss the complaint with the complainant in a safe area, but away from a public view.
 - b) Listen attentively,
 - c) Be polite and respectful at all times,
 - d) Take the concerns seriously and arrange for them to be looked into thoroughly
 - e) Resolve the matter to the best of their ability in consultation with colleagues and managers as appropriate as soon as possible and, where appropriate, take steps to prevent it happening again.
 - f) Staff need to check with complainants that they are happy with the response or whether they would like to make a formal complaint in writing.

- g) Oral complaints and their outcome need to be logged
- 8.6 When a written complaint is received an appropriate manager will:
- a) Ensure the matter is investigated
 - b) Reply within 7 working days (this includes weekends)
 - c) If a case is complex, it may take longer to complete a thorough investigation, potentially involving other staff and managers and resolve any issues. If this happens, we will contact the complainant within 10 working days to update them of progress.
 - d) Follow the procedure outline in section 9 below.
- 8.7 Where a complaint has been raised via Social Media, an appropriate member of staff will be asked to respond by signposting to the Complaints Form which can be found on the YMCA Black Country Group website.
- 8.8 In the case of complaints raised by our housing residents, they must be given the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with us.

9 Addressing Written Complaints

- 9.1 The procedure describes the formal process that must be followed when a compliment / comment / complaint is submitted formally in writing to any staff member, by either a YMCA customer or staff member (including where the complainant may have originated as an informal complaint).
- 9.2 Compliments, Comments and Complaint Forms
Standard compliments, comments and complaint forms are located around the building to be accessible for all customers (sample attached). Departmental managers are responsible for ensuring that the forms are available.
- 9.3 Receipt of a Written Complaint (on the appropriate form or otherwise in writing)
- a) On receipt of a written complaint, it is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure the communication is dated and signed by the customer where possible.
 - b) A copy of the complaint should be passed on to the Chief Finance Officer without delay for recording purposes, with the relevant Chief Operating Officer copied in.
 - c) The complaint must then be passed on to the appropriate departmental/project manager.
 - d) If the departmental/project manager is unavailable, due to annual leave or sickness, the complaint must be given to the Executive Head / Head of Service responsible for that department. If the Executive Head / Head of Service is not available then the Chief Finance Officer will delegate the matter to another manager.
- 9.4 Departmental/Project Manager's Actions
The Departmental/Project Manager will: -
- a) Impartially investigate the matter.
 - b) Put in place corrective action to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence and respond to the complaint. If the emerging issues are deemed serious and outside the scope of their responsibility, pass on to their Exec manager. It should be noted that the departmental manager may want to consult with the Exec manager during the investigation.
- 9.5 Executive Head / Head of Service's Actions
If dealt with directly by the Executive Head / Head of Service, they will follow the same process as described for the line manager
- 9.6 In all instances a written response must be made within 7 working days of receiving the compliment, comment or complaint. A copy of the written response must be given to the Chief Finance Officer. Where an investigation is extensive, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.
- 9.7 A complaint response must be provided even when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the complainant (or their representatives).

10 Appeal Process

- 10.1 If the customer is not happy with the response given by the departmental manager then the matter will be dealt with by the Executive Head / Head of Service or Chief Officer if the matter has been dealt with by the Head of Service
- 10.2 A written response must be made within 7 working days of receiving the appeal against the response previously given. A copy of the written response must also be given to the Chief Corporate Officer.

11 Possible Further Action

- 11.1 If the customer feels their concerns have not been addressed by YMCA Black Country Group having followed the above procedure, they can then contact the following: -

**Chair,
YMCA Black Country Group,
Tramway Drive
Wolverhampton
WV2 1BJ**

In respect of services regulated by OFSTED only,
**OFSTED,
Early Years,
Louisa House,
92-93 Edmund Street,
Birmingham,
B1 2NH**

Contact Telephone No: 08456 404040

In respect of housing projects programme only,
**Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN**

Contact Telephone No: 0300 111 3000

12 Storage

- 12.1 All documentation relating to each compliment, comment or complaint will be kept electronically in a Central File on the Executive Team SharePoint, together with the Compliment, Comments and Complaints Log.
- 12.2 Departments may keep copies of compliment, comments and complaints received and response made, for inspection purposes in accordance with governing body guidelines.
- 12.3 Any personal data included as part of a compliment, comment or complaint is to be handled in accordance with the Association's Data Protection Policy.

13 Equality Impact Assessment

- 13.1 YMCABCG is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, gender and disability and avoidance of discrimination to other equality groups related to age, disability, sex (gender), sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership or pregnancy and maternity. All of YMCABG's policies are subject to periodic review under the equality impact assessment process.

14 Publicity

- 14.1 A copy of YMCA Black Country Group's Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy is available on our website: www.ymcabg.org.uk
- 14.2 In addition, a copy of YMCA Black Country Group's Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Self Assessment can be found on our website: <https://www.ymcabg.org.uk/>
- 14.3 Posters will be displayed around projects notifying customers how to make a complaint, and information will be made available to residents of our Housing Services at point of induction into their accommodation.

15 Review

- 15.1 This policy and procedure will be scrutinised by the Governance Development Committee and approved by the Board year, or more regularly as required.

Version Tracking:

V5.01 – DRAFT for Governance Development Committee scrutiny 10 September 2024

V5.0X – DRAFT post Governance Development Committee scrutiny, for recommendation to the Board 17 September 2024

Summary of major amendments V4.03 to V5.01: to reflect requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Procedures

1. **Updated 4.2:** Definition of a Complaint per code provision 1.2
2. **Added 4.3:** Definition of a Service Request per code provision 1.4
3. **New Section Added 14:** Publicity per code provision 3.5
4. **Added 8.6:** New provision to ensure residents are given the opportunity to have a representative per code provision 3.6
5. **Added 9.7:** Reference to response detailing any outstanding actions and that these are tracked and resolved promptly per code provision 6.6 and 6.17
6. **Added 8.2:** Reference to a standard and collaborative approach per code provision 9.8

Summary of major amendments from V5.01: V6:01:

- Throughout policy reference to the 'Chief Corporate Officer' changed to 'Chief Finance Officer.'
- 8.2 Clarification given that 'Complaints can be made in any way and with any member of staff.'
- 8.3 Added: 'We will accept complaints within 12 months of the issue occurring or the complainant becoming aware of the issue, unless there are reasons for this time frame to be extended. Extensions to this time frame will be dealt with on a case by case basis and the Chief Finance Officer will ultimately decide if a complaint should be heard.'
- 14.3 Added: 'Posters will be displayed around projects notifying customers how to make a complaint, and information will be made available to residents of our Housing Services at point of induction into their accommodation'
- 15.1 Review period changed to annually.

YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION