



Lincolnshire YMCA Ltd

Policy Document

Resident Complaints and Feedback Policy

August 2026

Owned by: Director of Housing

Date Approved:

Review Date:

1.0 Introduction

The Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code became statutory from 1 April 2024 under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and landlords such as YMCA Lincolnshire are now expected to comply as a legal requirement.

At YMCA Lincolnshire, we have a positive complaint handling culture in place in relation to resolving disputes. We are committed to providing a quality service for our residents and stakeholders, working in a transparent and accountable way that builds trust and respect.

YMCA Lincolnshire operates a two-stage complaints process and complaints will always be received positively and be viewed as a way of improving service delivery.

We will continue to improve our service by listening and responding to the views of our residents and stakeholders and in particular by responding positively to complaints by putting mistakes right.

In relation to complaints handling, we will:

- Be fair – by treating people fairly and following a fair process
- Put things right when they have gone wrong
- Learning from all complaints received, amending our processes where necessary

2.0 Definition of a Complaint

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.

This can include issues such as disrepair, tenancy rights, anti-social behaviour responses, communal area management or the landlords own complaints handling process.

A service request is a request from a resident to the organisation requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, however if a resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, the matter will be treated as a complaint and handled in accordance with this policy. Residents will not be required to repeatedly raise the same issue for it to be treated as a complaint.

A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction, we will give the resident the choice as to whether they would like to make a complaint or not.

3.0 Who can Complain?

Complaints should normally be raised within 12 months of the issue arising; however discretion may be exercised where there are good reasons for any delay.

We will accept complaints via an organisation, a representative or an individual acting on behalf of a resident and this will be handled in the same way as if the complaint had been made by the resident themselves.

Complaints can be made verbally, in writing, electronically or through a representative.

If a complaint is received from the next of kin of a resident who has passed away, we will deal with this in line with the wider YMCA Lincolnshire complaints policy.

4.0 When a complaint won't be dealt with in accordance with this policy

An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey or via wider feedback requests will not be defined as a complaint. Wherever possible, details will be included as to how a complaint can be made.

Where a complaint does not qualify to be handled under this procedure, the reason for this will be communicated in writing to the complainant, also explaining that the complainant can contact the Housing Ombudsman if they do not feel that this decision is correct or fairly applied. Reasonable reasons include:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago.
- 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.

Each complaint will be considered on its own individual merits based on the information provided or obtained during an investigation.

5.0 Our complaints handling process

All staff are responsible for recognising and responding appropriately to expressions of dissatisfaction. However, complaints will be handled by appropriately trained staff who are in a position of seniority (Service Manager or Director of Housing) and able to make decisions and changes to the service if required. The complaint handler will deal with all complaints promptly and fairly in line with the policy and procedure.

Complaints can be made in writing (via email or letter), over the telephone, face-to-face or electronically using a QR code.

All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and the letter will make it clear which part of the complaint that we are or are not responsible for.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response received at Stage 1, this can be escalated to Stage 2. Stage 2 complaints will be reviewed by a person not involved in the Stage 1 investigation.

We will fully support the complainant to escalate their complaint through all stages of the process, including to the Housing Ombudsman if required. Should there be a valid reason why a complaint cannot be escalated we will set these reasons out in writing.

If a complaint is in relation to a third party such as a contractor working on behalf of YMCA Lincolnshire, the third party will be required to adhere to the same timescales as detailed within our policy and procedure. The Service Manager or Director of Housing will oversee the complaints process and the complainant would not be required to submit two complaints.

We will respond to the resident as soon as the answer to the complaint is known. Outstanding actions will continue to be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.

If additional complaints are raised during the 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, 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.

A full record of the complaint and the outcomes will be documented using our in-house CRM system. This will include the original complaint, the date it was received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.

Complaint records will be maintained in accordance with YMCA Lincolnshire's data retention and information governance procedures.

6.0 Timescales and extensions

We will always aim to meet the timescales set out by The Housing Ombudsman:

Stage 1 – Acknowledge complaint within 5 working days and issue a response within 10 working days

Stage 2 – Acknowledge complaint within 5 working days and issue a response within 20 working days.

If an extension of time is required to enable us to further investigate the complaint at either stage 1 or 2, we will contact the complainant explaining the reason for the delay and requesting an extension of time. We will work to the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations that we will never look to extend the response timescale any further than 10 working days for a stage 1 complaint or 20 working days for a stage 2 complaint unless there is an exceptional reason to do so and if this is the case we will clearly explain this. At this point, we will also provide details of how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

7.0 How we will try to put things right?

Where something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and take steps to put things right. This can include but is not limited to:

- Saying sorry and acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- Providing an explanation and the reasons as to why things have gone wrong
- Providing assistance to put things right
- Taking action if there has been a delay
- Reconsidering or changing a decision that has been made
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum
- Providing a financial remedy
- Changing a policy, procedure or a practice.

The remedy that is offered will reflect the impact on the complainant and will set out what will happen and by when.

Our written responses will include:

- 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
- Details of how to escalate the matter to the next stage if the individual is not satisfied with the response. This will include escalation to the Housing Ombudsman if at stage 2

YMCA Lincolnshire will always consider the guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman when deciding on the appropriate remedy.

Residents are not required to explain or justify their reasons for requesting escalation to Stage 2. An expression of dissatisfaction with the Stage 1 response is sufficient.

8.0 Accessibility

YMCA Lincolnshire is committed to making the complaints process accessible to all residents in line with the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will be considered and implemented where appropriate, including:

- alternative communication formats
- interpreter or translation services
- advocacy support
- adjusted communication methods
- additional support for vulnerable residents

Residents may nominate a representative to act on their behalf.

Copies of this policy are available on YMCA Lincolnshire's website or by requesting a copy in writing, over the telephone or face to face.

9.0 Unacceptable resident behaviour

There may be rare instances where we may need to consider whether the behaviour of a complainant is acceptable where they repeatedly complain about the same thing. This behaviour will be managed in accordance with our unacceptable behaviour procedures and relevant policies. We will record any restrictions that we put in place and will review these regularly. We will ensure that any restrictions in relation to contact made due to unacceptable behaviour will be proportionate and taking into consideration the Equality Act 2010.

10.0 Continuous learning and improvement

YMCA Lincolnshire will seek to learn from every complaint received and will track trends to improve service delivery. For each complaint received, we will consider if service improvements could be made as a result of learning from the complaint. The information obtained whilst dealing with the complaint will be used to identify and introduce positive changes in service delivery, reporting back on wider learning and improvements to our stakeholders including residents forums, staff members and our Board of Trustees.

The Director of Housing will take overall responsibility for the handling of complaints and will assess and report on themes or trends, identifying systemic issues, serious risks and any policies and procedures that require a review.

Our Tackling Homelessness Services Trustees will take strategic oversight of complaints and work with the Director of Housing to ensure a positive complaint handling culture. Our Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) will be a member of the Tackling Homelessness Committee.

11.0 Monitoring, reporting and reviewing

YMCA Lincolnshire's Residents' Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure, our self-assessment and details of how to contact the Housing Ombudsman and

the complaint handling code are available to download from the YMCA Lincolnshire website.

We will produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report which will include:

- Our self-assessment against the complaints handling code
- A qualitative and quantitative analysis of our performance which will include a summary of any types of complaint that we have not accepted
- Any findings of non-compliance with the code by the Ombudsman
- The service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints
- Any annual reports about our performance received from the Ombudsman
- Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to our work.

A report will be provided to YMCA Lincolnshire's Board of Trustees at the AGM and a copy of this report will be published on the website in the section relating to complaints.

A self-assessment will be carried out annually or if required following a significant restructure, merger, a change in the complaints procedure or following an Ombudsman investigation. A copy of this will be displayed on our website.

If for any reason we are unable to comply with our complaints procedure due to exceptional circumstances (such as a cyber incident), we will inform the Housing Ombudsman, any residents who may be affected and also publish details on our website providing a timescale for returning to compliance with the code.

This policy will be reviewed every year in line with our self-assessment to ensure that it remains relevant, up to date and follows good practice.

Written by	Approved by	Review date	Next review date
Helen Wright	Housing and Property Committee	Approved 19 th May 2025	May 2026
Updated by Helen Wright			