Complaints Policy

Policy Level	Two
Policy Category	Business
Policy Authority	Senior Leadership Team
Lead Committee	Senior Leadership Team
Lead Director	Phillipa Spicer
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YMCA Fairthorne Group (YMCA FG) is committed to providing excellent levels of service. We strive to meet the rising expectations of our service users, customers, prospective customers and third parties. We encourage feedback about where our services and facilities can be improved or where expectations have not been met. This policy complies with the requirements of The Equality Act (2010) and is in accordance with YMCA FG's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

1. Glossary/terms

YMCA Fairthorne Group – YMCA FG
Chief Executive Officer – CEO
Customer – any service user, customer, prospective customer or third party
Recipient – member of staff receiving the complaint
Complaint Log – A register of all complaints received, held and controlled by the CEO's office, represented by the Executive Assistant.
Our Complaints Procedure – A shortened version of our policy to be provided to customers (see 10).
Complaint Handler – the person allocated to investigate a complaint.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to outline YMCA FG's commitment to dealing with complaints effectively. This policy underpins our values and 'Our Complaints Procedure' (see point 10) and has the following objectives.

- To view complaints as a positive mechanism to improving our service.
- To ensure quality services are delivered to high standards.
- To increase member and customer satisfaction and loyalty.

3. Scope and Data Protection

This policy applies to all parts of YMCA FG including customer and non-customer facing roles, prospective customers and/or third parties and representatives. This policy also applies to other organisations that provide services to YMCA FG customers under contract.

This policy does not apply to complaints received from staff concerning their colleagues; these will be dealt with under HR policies and procedures.

All complaint information should be stored securely in the Complaints area of our file server, including copies of written correspondence relating to the complaint, its investigation and resolution. If the complainant has a customer record with YMCA FG a note will be made on their file that a complaint was raised, along with a summary of the complaint.

Anonymised information from complaints will be used for the purposes of organisational learning and service improvement.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The overall responsibility for the operation of this policy is with the CEO.

For YMCA Fairthorne Housing the Member Responsible for Complaints is the Chair of the Board and the Executive Responsible for Complaints is the Director of Youth Services.

YMCA FG managers will ensure that their respective teams handle complaints in accordance with this policy. The Executive Assistant will ensure that the complaints system is administered correctly, and complaints are allocated to the appropriate person for investigation and response.

Surveys undertaken by YMCA FG that are targeted at customers should include information about how to complain and complaints that are generated from a survey process should be managed using this complaints process.

5. Definition of a complaint

A complaint is: "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 or group of individuals."

A service request is a request from an individual requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints but must be recorded, monitored and reviewed. If there is dissatisfaction with the handling of a service request, even if the handling of the request remains ongoing, it must be raised as a complaint using this complaints process. While the complaint is being investigated, YMCA FG will continue to address the service request to resolve the core issue.

If a complaint relates to a serious health and safety concern, or a safeguarding concern, this will be escalated to a relevant health and safety or safeguarding lead to support the investigation and ensure safety and safeguarding remain paramount.

YMCA FG regularly requests feedback about its services, and these must include details of how individuals can complain. Where this feedback relates to YMCA Fairthorne Housing the details should include how to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

An individual does not need to use the word "complaint" for their matter to be treated as such and there is no time limit for when complaints must be made.

Complaints will be accepted when referred to us within 12 months of the issue occurring, or the individual becoming aware of the issue.

A vexatious complaint is one that is pursued, regardless of its merits, solely to harass, annoy or subdue somebody. It is a complaint that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, burdensome or unwarranted. If a complaint becomes vexatious YMCA FG may refuse further investigation and refer the complainant to the relevant ombudsman.

6. Handling & recording complaints

Stage 1

a. A complaint can be reported in any form, including by telephone, email, letter, website, SMS or via social media.

b. If the complaint is in the form of a telephone or face to face conversation, the recipient should use their discretion and explore further details with the complainant if they are able. The recipient should record the details of the conversation.

c. The complaint should be sent immediately to the Executive Assistant, via feedback@ email, telephone or letter. The recipient of the complaint does not need take any further action at this stage.

d. The Executive Assistant will allocate the most appropriate member of staff as the Complaint Handler to investigate the complaint. The Complaint Handler will contact the complainant as soon as possible to discuss any further details needed and if possible, identify what resolution the complainant is looking for. Immediate contact with the complainant is advised, to enable us to provide the best outcome.

e. The Executive Assistant will allocate a complaint number from our internal Complaints Log and send an acknowledgement letter to the complainant within 5 working days, including the complaint reference number and copy of our Complaints Policy advising of the 10 working day response time.

f. The Complaint Handler will undertake a full investigation and arrange a response to the complainant, within 10 working days. Any relevant regulatory bodies should be informed if necessary (Ofsted and Housing Ombudsman). It is the Complaint Handler's responsibility to liaise with the relevant operational Director to identify whether or not a regulatory body also needs to be informed. If the matter cannot be fully resolved within this time period, then the Complaint Handler will contact the customer and advise further. This process must take no longer than 20 working days from the customer receiving their acknowledgement letter. The customer can choose to have a suitable representative to deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with YMCA FG.

g. Where complainants raise additional complaints during the investigation these should be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage

1 response has not been sent. If additional complaints are not related or would unreasonably delay the Complaint Handle's response in (f.) above, the new issues should be logged as a new complaint.

h. The Complaint Handler's Stage 1 response should include the following:

- 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
- it will also ensure that the data protection policy is applied, and personal data redacted where required.

i. The Complaint Handler will send a copy of their response to the Executive Assistant via feedback@ email, who will upload a copy to our internal Complaints Log.

Stage 2 Appeal

j. Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response they can request the complaint is escalated to Stage 2. Stage 2 complaints are managed by our Executive Leadership Team and Stage 2 complaints cannot be investigated by the same person who investigated at Stage 1.

k. Stage 2 consideration must be a review of the adequacy of the Stage 1 response, as well as any new and relevant information not previously considered. Stage 2 must not be a more thorough, detailed investigation of the complaint. It is expected that this will have happened at Stage 1.

l. A final response to the Stage 2 review must be issued within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated by the complainant. If this is not possible to achieve it is possible to extend this by a further 20 working days if good reason is provided and explained clearly to the complainant. If an extension is required for complaints to YMCA Fairthorne Housing the complainant must also be given details of the Housing Ombudsman.

m. The Stage 2 response should include the following:

- 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 relevant regulator (Housing Ombudsman, Ofsted and Charity Commission) if the individual remains dissatisfied

- it will also ensure that the data protection policy is applied, and personal data redacted where required.

7. Remedies to Complaints

Remedies must consider guidance received by the relevant regulator or ombudsman and reflect the impact on the individual as a result of any fault identified.

Goodwill gestures and compensation payments can be made within the Complaint Handlers discretion, and consideration to a return of use of that service in preference to a monetary refund. Any monetary payments should be logged in the Complaints Log and noted on the customer file.

It is the responsibility of the Complaint Handler to implement any remedy and note this in the Complaints Log.

8. Complaints performance and service improvement report

YMCA FG will undertake an annual review of complaints to identify trends, risks, and opportunities for service improvement. This review will include analysis of complaint volumes, themes, and outcomes across the organisation, with comparisons to previous periods where appropriate. Findings from the review will be used to inform service improvement, governance oversight, and quality assurance processes.

This review will consider:

- Complaint volumes overall and by key organisational areas (e.g. company, branch, or service)
- Trends over time
- The nature and categories of complaints
- Any complaints relating to safeguarding or health and safety
- Outcomes, including refused complaints
- Learning identified and improvements implemented as a result of complaints

YMCA Fairthorne Housing must also complete an annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report which includes:

- a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the charity's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the charity has refused to accept;
- any findings of non-compliance with this Code;
- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
- any annual report about the organisation's performance from the relevant Ombudsman; and
- any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to the work of the charity;
- a written response from the governing body to the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement report
- If required, this report must be provided to the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, and the governing body's response must be submitted annually to the Housing Ombudsman and published on our website.

9. Commitment to Organisational Learning

All complaints processes should identify, report and apply organisational learning. It is the responsibility of the Complaint Handler to explore this with colleagues and ensure change is implemented where needed to improve our services.

10. YMCA FG's Complaints Procedure (A PDF version is provided to customers)

Complaints Policy

YMCA Fairthorne Group is committed to providing excellent levels of service. We are constantly striving to meet the expectations of our service users and welcome feedback on where our services and facilities can be improved or where expectations have not been met.

To enable us to provide the best outcome, please contact us as soon as possible with the details of your concern, ensuring you provide your contact details.

YMCA Fairthorne Group
Fairthorne Manor
Curdridge
Southampton
Hampshire
SO30 2GH

E: feedback@ymca-fg.org

T: 01489 785228

What will happen next?

1. We will send you a letter/email acknowledging receipt of your complaint within 5 working days of receiving it, enclosing a copy of this procedure.

2. The details of your complaint will then be allocated to the most appropriate member of staff known as the Complaint Handler for investigation, who will contact you within 10 working days of sending the acknowledgement.

3. After the initial acknowledgement you will be kept informed of progress by the allocated Complaint Handler. Once the matter has been fully investigated, the Complaint Handler will send you a written reply including suggestions for resolving the matter, within 20 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter. This is called Stage 1.

4. If you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again and we will arrange for your complaint to be escalated to a member of our Executive Leadership Team with oversight from the CEO, to review the resolution. This is called Stage 2 Appeal, and we will communicate the outcome of your appeal to you in writing within 20 working days of your contact.

5. If you are complaining about a regulated activity, you will be given information for that service's Ombudsman in your initial acknowledgement.

6. If you are still not satisfied with the resolution at Stage 2 Appeal you can contact the relevant service Ombudsman using the contact information we have provided.

7. You can also contact the Charity Commission via www.gov.uk. The Charity commission regulates charities in England and Wales. They make sure that charities are accountable, well-run and meet their legal obligations. The commission will consider complaints related to serious abuse or illegal activity at a charity.

8. We will only tell those people involved in resolving your complaint about it. Sometimes we may need to share your complaint or concerns with other individuals to understand the situation fully. If you are a child or young person making a complaint, we will talk with you about any concerns we have for your wellbeing that might make it necessary to tell any other adults.

9. After the complaint is resolved, we will keep the information on record, using the data protection and document retention protocols set out in our Data Protection Policy. If you use our services and have a customer file, we will keep a record on your file that you have made a complaint. We use anonymised information from complaints to make sure we learn and improve our services. If we must change any of the timescales above, we will let you know and explain why.

YMCA Fairthorne Group, a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales, Company Number 4336719, Registered Charity Number 1090981. Registered Office: YMCA Fairthorne Group, YMCA Fairthorne Manor, Curdridge, Southampton, SO30 2GH.

07/2026