



Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

Complaints Procedure

March 2024

Complaints Procedure

APPLICATION OF THIS PROCEDURE

YMCA England & Wales is committed to ensuring that there are effective means to review, respond and act on complaints in relation to its service delivery. This procedure links to the Charity's obligations under the Code of Fundraising Practice and the Charity Governance Code.

This procedure relates only to YMCA England & Wales. Local or Member YMCAs operate as autonomous bodies, with their own Boards and Executive Teams, therefore any complaints regarding a Member YMCA should be raised directly with that YMCA.

OBJECTIVE

1. We are committed to providing services that meet the standards agreed with customers (including members, our supporters, young people and stakeholders). Through the implementation of this procedure, 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. In general, we will attempt to resolve expressions of dissatisfaction within 24 hours where this is possible, and therefore encourage anyone with a complaint 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.

AIMS OF THE PROCEDURE

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

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5. 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.
6. We make appropriate arrangements where necessary to ensure that customers with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected.

DEFINITIONS

7. Stakeholder: refers to all service users whether they be our members, our supporters, young people involved in our national programmes, retail customers or wider stakeholders involved in our work.
8. Expression of dissatisfaction: a customer may express dissatisfaction with an aspect of our service.
10. Service Request: a service request is a request from a stakeholder requiring action to be taken by the Charity to put something right. A complaint should be raised when the stakeholder raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.
11. Suggestion: We recognise that sometimes an expression of dissatisfaction is not a complaint, but 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 stakeholders while they are on the premises
 - b) Monitoring social media and online forums
 - c) Asking employees about customer feedback
 - d) Customer feedback surveys and suggestion forms
12. We recognise that suggestions may be things that take a longer time to respond to (as they may include suggestions of 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.
13. 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 stakeholder or group of stakeholders. 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 three months of the occurrence which is being complained about.

14. A complaint may be made by a current or former stakeholder, a prospective stakeholder, 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

15. 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 procedure 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 procedure 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
16. We will routinely monitor our performance in implementing this procedure and report outcomes to the Board and Executive Team.
17. The Finance and Audit Committee will consider the impact of very serious complaints on the risk register and report to the Trustee Board.
18. The procedure will be reviewed bi-annually to ensure it is effective and complies with current legislation and good practice. Any changes that are required will be progressed as necessary.

PROCEDURE

19. 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 should be handled through legal action
- c) Is an initial notification or request for service or information
- d) Is an initial report of anti-social behaviour
- e) Is an internal staff or volunteer complaint (which should instead be treated in line with the grievance or whistleblowing policies)
- f) Is raised anonymously or without any means of speaking to the complainant in order to substantiate their complaint

MAKING A COMPLAINT

- 20. A complaint can be raised in the following ways:
 - a) Completing a complaint form and handing it in at a reception our Charter House Square Office
 - b) By email to Enquiries@ymca.org.uk
 - c) By letter to our office: YMCA England & Wales, 10-11 Charterhouse Square, London, EC1M 6EH
 - d) Completing the complaint form on the YMCA England & Wales website
 - e) Verbally to a member of staff who will support the complainant to complete a complaint form
- 21. A summary of this procedure and a full copy will be made available on our website
- 22. Where the complaint concerns a Safeguarding issue, 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 Director of Resources will be sought.

EXCEPTIONAL VARIATION

24. A tiny minority of customers may account for a disproportionately and unreasonably high volume of complaints, diverting significant time and resource away from other customers. The following are examples where a complainant could be considered to placing an unreasonable demand on the Charity:
- Requesting large volumes of information, asking for responses within a short space of time, refusing to speak to an individual or insisting on speaking with another,
 - Refusing to accept the answer that has been provided, continuing to raise the same subject matter without providing any new evidence, continuously adding to or changing the subject matter of the complaint,
 - Refusal to co-operate (e.g. complaining without responding to clear and appropriate requests to clarify the complaint, and or requests for further information to investigate it),
 - Verbal abuse, aggression, violence (this is not just limited to actual physical or verbal abuse but can include derogatory remarks, rudeness, inflammatory allegations and threats of violence),
 - Overload of letters, calls, emails or contact via social media (this could include the frequency of contact as well as the volume of correspondence received as well as the frequency and length of telephone calls).
25. A member of the Executive Team must confirm that a complainant is acting unreasonably. Where this is so we will be,
- Providing a single point of contact;
 - Limiting contact to a single form - i.e., to writing, email or telephone only;
 - Limiting contact to certain times or to a limited number of times per week or month;
 - Declining to give any further consideration to an issue unless any additional evidence or information is provided;
 - Only considering a certain number of issues in a specific period.
26. The above course of action will be confirmed in writing to the complainant, alongside an explanation as where their complaint is considered unreasonable and what action is required to address this.

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

27. 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 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 Governance Committee, then the Chair of Trustees will work with the Director of Resources and Chief Executive to commission an investigation.
28. For the avoidance of doubt, this Complaints Procedure is for 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

29. 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

30. We will use anonymised complaints to support staff with training in delivering the Complaints Procedure.

STAGES OF COMPLAINT

Stage 1: Complaint

31. A complaint will first be investigated at stage one of the complaints procedure. YMCA will progress a complaint in a fair and transparent manner:
 - a) **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.
 - b) After acknowledging the complaint (above) we will contact the complainant (where appropriate) to gather further information. We will also meet with members of staff and stakeholders as necessary to agree a response
 - c) 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).

32. 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

33. If the stakeholder 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.
34. Grounds for appeal are:
 - a) Any aspect of their complaint has not been upheld
 - b) They are not satisfied with the method of redress (e.g. the action taken in response to a complaint)
35. 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 Governance Committee or Chair of the Board as is necessary and appropriate in the circumstances.
36. 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).

Fundraising

37. If your complaint is about YMCA England and Wales's fundraising and you are unsatisfied with YMCA England and Wales's response then you can escalate your complaint to the Fundraising Regulator. YMCA England and Wales is a member of the Fundraising Regulator and agrees to fundraise in accordance with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

38. The Executive Directors will be responsible for responding to complaints in their areas of responsibility.
39. The Director of Resources will report complaints where appropriate to the Finance and Audit Committee at their meetings.
40. The Director of Resources is responsible for liaising with the various nominated individuals, the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Board about reporting complaints to Regulators.

National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations

For more information, please contact:

YMCA England & Wales, 10-11 Charterhouse
Square, London EC1M 6EH

Tel: 020 7186 9500

Email: enquiries@ymca.org.uk



Here for young people
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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.

FAMILY & YOUTH WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

HOUSING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

SUPPORT & ADVICE