

# YMCA North Staffordshire

## ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2024 to 2025

A REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS AT NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE YMCA. APRIL 2024  
TO MARCH 2025

During 2024 to 2025 we received **19** complaints from **15** different residents living in the **206** homes owned by North Staffordshire YMCA . Two complainants made a complaint that covered two of the complaint categories, and these have been recorded in 2 categories immediately below.

### Categories:

Anti Social Behaviour	14
Food service	2
Building Maintenance	3
YMCA Staff	2

- 3 complaints related to our building maintenance and repairs service.
- 14 complaints related to how our residents behaved and how we dealt with these anti-social behaviour issues.
- 0 complaints related to rents and utility supplies after moving into a new home
- 0 complaints additionally related to how we dealt with rent.
- 2 complaints related to complaints about staff
- 2 complaints related to the YMCA food service

In 0% of the cases, the complainant was not satisfied with response from the YMCA at Stage 1 of the Complaints Policy and they asked for their complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.

Outcomes at Stage 2 N/A.

None of our complaints were referred to or investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service in 2024/25.

### Learning from complaints to improve services

Issue	Learning point and actions taken
A complaint about the maintenance service was related to an unreliable hot water supply to one of our Flats. The	Upon investigation this repair was finally completed to the complainant's satisfaction. One staff member had

Tenant had waited a long time and had seen maintenance staff work on the shower several times.	attempted to complete the repair but had failed and not discussed the issues with colleagues. Some staff training has been completed following the complaint.
A resident complained about how harshly a staff member had spoken to them in front of others.	The staff member concerned was interviewed by HR staff and reminded about the staff code of conduct. There have been no repeat incidents since this.
The majority of complaints were about anti-social behaviour issues some customers were using the complaint service to get an update on their dispute as they wanted a speedy outcome.	<p>We realise that not knowing what's going on once a complaint has been made has a big impact on customers, so we've spoken to customer facing staff and impressed upon them the customers need to be kept updated, to be transparent about response timescales and not to make any promises that we would be able to meet.</p> <p>We operate a Customer Forum meets every week and the Forum is open to discuss issues the Tenants have. By opening up the discussion of these issues we have found that many Tenants are more understanding and tolerant of others and there can consequently be a reduction in complaints and an increase in customer satisfaction.</p>
One resident complained that a vacuum cleaner had been removed from her room by staff without her permission.	This was a clear mistake as the staff member believed it was a YMCA vacuum cleaner (it was the same brand). The staff team have since improved their communication over issues such as this.
We have supported accommodation. Customers very occasionally have complained about the boundaries that staff have set. We have explained their actions and referenced them against YMCA Policy and Procedure which went a long way to alleviating their concerns.	We recognise the distress that any miscommunication by staff can cause to Tenants. So we kept them fully updated while we investigated their complaint, explaining our actions in detail and also referencing YMCA Policy and Procedures.
The complaints about the food service related to residents who ordered late meals, yet arrived to find no meal for them.	Staff from different departments met and discussed procedure and communication. This has improved the process.

## Conclusions:

The complaints we received covered a range of issues, but the common themes of dissatisfaction which we will attempt to resolve are:

- Not keeping customers up to date
- Customers' understanding of how staff arrive at the decisions which they make.
- Better communication between staff to help problem solving and improve the processes that are already in place. Communication was also an issue within the complaints report the previous year.

We should be easy to contact via telephone on **01782 222376**, email [hello@ymcans.org.uk](mailto:hello@ymcans.org.uk) and always reply to an email within 48 hours (on working days). We're keen to know if we fall short and we're grateful for any feedback on our complaints process.

## BOARD'S RESPONSE TO THE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

On **24<sup>th</sup> March 2025** the Board received:

- the 23/24 annual complaints performance and service improvement report for residents living in homes owned and managed by **North Staffordshire YMCA**.
- An update to the complaints policy for residents living in homes owned and managed by **North Staffordshire YMCA** to meet the requirements of the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024
- A self-assessment against the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024

The Board has a Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) who provides additional assurance to the Board on the effectiveness of **North Staffordshire YMCA's** complaints system. The MRC and the Board have considered and approved the self-assessment that Charity complies with all aspects of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024.

Throughout the year the Board has challenged the data and information provided to the Board. **North Staffordshire YMCA** adopts the Housing Ombudsman's definition of a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction. This gives the Board assurance that **North Staffordshire YMCA** is recording an accurate volume of complaints, as the Board does not believe that a low volume of complaints would be a positive sign. A new complaints management system has been in place throughout 24/25. This has provided the Board with additional assurance on the accuracy of data on complaint handling.

One of **North Staffordshire YMCA's** values is 'we learn'. As a small provider owning and managing under 206 homes the Board considers a summary of each complaint and the lessons learned from individual complaints. Given our size, North

Staffordshire YMCA does not have enough complaints to learn from trends. But our learning from individual complaints shows that communication is a key factor across complaints. Training, expectations, and systems have all been improved during 24/25. The Board will monitor the feedback on communication through the individual complaints reported to the Board reports moving forward

## **Response to the report from the Chair and MRC**

### **Peter Dartford – Board Member with Specific Responsibility for Complaints 2024-2025**

*As the Trustee with specific responsibility for complaints, I approach the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report with a particular focus on whether our systems are fair, accessible, and genuinely resident-centred. My role requires me not only to scrutinise the outcomes of individual complaints but also to understand the culture behind how concerns are handled. This year's report provides assurance that YMCA North Staffordshire continues to make steady progress in strengthening that culture in line with the Regulator for Social Housing Standards and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.*

*From my oversight perspective, the most important indicator of a healthy complaints system is not the volume of complaints, but the quality of engagement residents experience when they come forward. What I have observed throughout the year is a clear willingness from staff to listen, to acknowledge the lived experience of the resident, and to respond in a way that seeks early and fair resolution. This aligns strongly with the Ombudsman's emphasis on proportionality, clarity and timeliness.*

*A significant part of my role is reviewing whether learning from complaints is being taken seriously, and in this regard the organisation has demonstrated maturity. Themes emerging from my reviews frequently connected to communication: how information is conveyed, how expectations are set, and how staff explain the reasons behind their decisions. These are not minor operational points; they are core to building trust. I am encouraged that the leadership team has responded proactively, focusing on better staff coordination, clearer internal processes and more consistent engagement with residents.*

*I have also taken a close interest in the accessibility of the complaints process. The organisation's adoption of the Ombudsman's definition of a complaint—welcoming any expression of dissatisfaction—is a strong foundation. Combined with the weekly Customer Forum, which provides a meaningful space for residents to raise issues openly, I am confident that residents have multiple, clear routes to be heard.*

*As the Board Member responsible for complaints, I will continue to monitor the effectiveness of improvements implemented over the past year, paying particular attention to communication standards and follow-through on agreed actions. My focus is to ensure that every concern raised is treated with*

***fairness and respect, that decisions are transparent, and that residents receive a level of service that reflects our values.***

***The Board remains committed to improving further, and I will continue to provide robust challenge and oversight to ensure that our complaints service meets both regulatory expectations and the expectations of the people who live in our homes.***

#### **Glenn Handforth Chair of the Board 2024-2025**

***As Trustees, our responsibility is to provide clear oversight, strong challenge, and consistent assurance that YMCA North Staffordshire is meeting its obligations to residents under both the Regulator for Social Housing Standards and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Having reviewed the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report, I am encouraged by the organisation's continued commitment to openness, learning, and accountability.***

***What stands out most in this year's performance is not the number of complaints received, but the culture underpinning how they are handled. The adoption of the Ombudsman's definition of a complaint ensures that residents' voices are captured from the earliest point, rather than minimised or dismissed. This approach gives the Board confidence that the organisation is not only listening but proactively welcoming feedback as an opportunity for improvement.***

***The themes arising across the year highlight that communication — both with residents and internally between teams — remains central to high-quality service delivery. While some issues raised were operational in nature, the broader learning relates to how clearly, consistently, and respectfully information is shared. The organisational response to these insights has been positive, with staff development, clearer expectations, and enhanced internal coordination already implemented. The Board will continue to monitor the impact of these improvements closely.***

***One area of assurance for me is the degree to which staff responses at Stage 1 were sufficient to resolve concerns. The fact that no residents sought escalation to Stage 2 indicates that responses were timely, fair, and well-explained. This does not mean we are complacent; rather, it reinforces the importance of early engagement and clear explanations — principles firmly reflected in the Ombudsman's Code.***

***I also welcome the role of the weekly Customer Forum, which provides an open platform for dialogue and shared problem-solving. It is encouraging to see residents actively involved in shaping their living environment and supporting one another, with staff facilitating constructive conversations.***

***Finally, I want to reaffirm the Board's commitment to continual improvement. The oversight of our Member Responsible for Complaints provides an additional layer of scrutiny, ensuring that organisational learning remains central to our governance. As Trustees, we remain dedicated to ensuring that every resident feels heard, respected, and confident in the quality of the services we provide. This report demonstrates progress, and we will continue working to strengthen that progress in the year ahead.***