

Customer Feedback Policy

What we do if customers are unhappy or pretty chuffed with the service they've had.

1. Policy Statement

The Yorkshire Housing (YH) business strategy sets out how we will revolutionise our service offer to customers by being customer obsessed, providing homes and places to be proud of and shifting to pre-emptive ways of working. Having a clear and accessible customer feedback policy is a valuable tool that aligns our business strategy and our regulatory requirements.

YH is committed to delivering an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible, ensuring complaints are dealt with empathetically, quickly and fairly. We're proud of our YH values, and how we respond to feedback reflects these.

It matters to us what our customers think; if we've got something wrong, we want to make sure that we put things right. When we've provided a great, customer obsessed service we want to recognise that too whilst continuously learning and improving.

This policy sets out YH's approach to feedback made by customers and other stakeholders. Complaints will also be considered by non YH tenants if the issues concern YH services or customers.

2. Policy Aims

- Increase customer satisfaction by resolving complaints empathetically, quickly and fairly in a consistent manner and listening to all feedback.
- Continuously improve by understanding and reviewing areas of our service which cause dissatisfaction amongst customers and learn from trends and patterns of behaviour.
- To ensure continuous improvement by learning from complaints and other feedback.

We'll deliver this by:

- Having a consistent and impartial framework for dealing with complaints, compliments and feedback.
- Encouraging customer feedback both great and not so great.
- Resolving service failures at the first point of contact where possible.
- Giving colleagues and customers clear guidance, on how complaints, compliments and feedback will be dealt with.
- Using complaints as an opportunity to rebuild trust with our customers.
- Training colleagues to provide a top-notch, customer obsessed complaint handling and investigation service.
- Use insight and learning from complaints, compliments and feedback to shape customer obsessed services across YH.

3. Policy Details

What is a complaint?

In line with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code, YH defines a complaint as, “***an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own colleagues or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents***”.

At YH we want to hear feedback about the services we provide and see a complaint as an opportunity to learn what we need to improve.

Any feedback through the Chief Executive will be progressed in line with our Customer Feedback Policy.

Complaints from customers living in homes managed as part of Swarcliffe PFI are not covered under this policy. These will be dealt with by the Swarcliffe PFI Team, following the Swarcliffe PFI complaints good practice notes. Customers can raise complaints in the same way as customers living in YH homes.

What is not a complaint?

- An initial request for a service or information including initial reports of fly tipping or vandalism.
- Complaints submitted more than three months since the issue occurred (this may not apply where complaints concern safeguarding or health and safety issues).
- Where a customer is taking legal action against YH on the same issue or YH is taking legal action against the customer on the same issue for which YH is not responsible.
- A dispute with a neighbour which can be dealt with through the terms of the tenancy agreement or the anti-social behaviour (ASB) Policy.
- MP, Councillor and Citizen Advice enquiries that are not complaints (these are separate enquiries handled by the customer resolution team).
- Complaints relating to rent increases (where the rent increase is driven by government guidance/ regulation).

- Complaints about the actions of an organisation that is not working for or supported by YH.
- Where the complaint is alleged to be of a discriminatory nature and a potential breach of the Equality Act 2010. These will be dealt with through a legal route.
- A decision or request for review about a housing application that is subject to procedures as part of a Local Authority Choice Based Lettings system, for example, the banding or housing priority that has been given when applying for housing.
- Feedback about something in an existing YH Policy, for example, policy timescales for repairs. These are treated as suggestions.

Whilst we don't treat these issues as a complaint under this policy, we'll deal with them appropriately. We'll respond to the customer to let them know why it's not being picked up as part of the complaints policy and explain what we can do to help.

Complaints about colleagues

Depending on the severity of a colleague complaint, we may need to complete an internal review using our people policies. Complaints against colleagues will be reviewed and acknowledged by the customer resolution team and passed to the individual's manager to investigate and respond within 10 working days. In these circumstances, to protect colleague privacy, full details of any action taken against an individual colleague won't be disclosed to the customer.

What is a compliment?

We define a compliment as “***praise or say thanks for the service offered by a YH colleague or contractor***”.

Compliments make our day, who doesn't love getting great feedback! We'll pass on any compliments we receive to the colleague and their manager. We'll log these for sharing more widely and use them to identify areas of good practice that YH can learn from.

Passing on comments and suggestions

There may be time when customers don't want to make a complaint but want to comment and makes suggestions about how YH could do things differently or in a better way. Feedback will be shared with our customers and service teams and logged in the customer resolution team so that we can learn and improve.

How a customer can give us feedback

Customers can make a complaint, pass on a compliment comment or suggestion by:

- Email: customerservices@yorkshirehousing.co.uk.
- Website: www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk.
- The Customer portal.
- Phone: 0345 3664404.
- Letter: The Place, 2 Central Place, Leeds, LS10 1FB.

- Social Media, although complaints by this channel can be taken offline to maintain confidentiality.
- Customer review sites.
- In person.
- Via a local Councillor or Member of Parliament.

Having a representative or advocate act on your behalf

Customers can ask an advocate or representative to raise a complaint on their behalf. YH will ask for authority to speak to them beforehand. This could be a family member, friend, social worker or support worker. Advocates or representative of the customer can raise a complaint on behalf of the customer where the customer:

- Is unable to complain themselves because of physical incapacity or a lack of capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Has requested the representative to act on their behalf (proof must be provided); or
- Has passed away.

The Complaints Resolution Process

YH acknowledges that sometimes we get things wrong or don't meet the high levels of service that our customers expect. When this happens, we want to resolve these issues or complaints as quickly as possible and have simple and clear processes for doing so. Our policy adheres to the principles outlined in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code regarding complaint resolution.

We'll always try to resolve things quickly for the customer as part of our customer obsessed complaints handling processes. We want to be able to put things right as soon as possible and get a positive outcome for customers. But if we can't do this within 5 days of customers telling us that they're unhappy with something or if they request that a formal complaint is raised; then we'll log and acknowledge a formal Stage 1 complaint within 5 days of receipt.

Stage 1 formal complaint

A complaint needs to be made within 6 months of the issue happening. When a complaint is made formal it'll be logged and acknowledged at Stage 1 within 5 working days.

The customer resolution team will get in touch with the customer to get a clear understanding of the complaint and the outcomes that the customer is expecting and confirm in an acknowledgement letter. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear the customer must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.

We aim to deal with Stage 1 complaints within **10 days** of logging. If this isn't possible, in agreement with the customer, we'll extend the complaint giving a clear explanation and details of when a response will be received. This will not exceed 10 days without good reason. The complaints officer will keep in touch with the customer throughout the process and give them an opportunity to comment on findings before a decision is made.

At the completion of Stage 1, we will ensure that customers are communicated with and advised of the following information:

- the complaint stage.
- the outcome of the complaint.
- the reasons for any decisions made.
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right.
- details of how often we'll update the customer on any outstanding actions, to ensure actions are completed satisfactorily.
- details of any outstanding actions and how often we'll update the customer on any outstanding actions to ensure actions are completed satisfactorily.
- details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied.

Stage 2 review formal complaint

If a customer believes YH has failed to address their complaint, then they can ask for an escalation to Stage 2 of the complaints process. We'll log an acknowledge a Stage 2 complaint within five days of the customer request to escalate. We'll ask the customer why they're not happy with the Stage 1 outcome and what they are expecting from the Stage 2 review. The customer's request must outline the reasons they feel the complaint hasn't been fully resolved at Stage 1. This will be escalated to a Senior Manager to complete the Stage 2 review and they will seek clarification from the customer if any aspect of the complaint is unclear.

In instances where YH declines to escalate a complaint we will clearly communicate in writing our reasons for not escalating as well as the resident's right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision.

We aim to deal with Stage 2 to complaints within **20 days** of the request to escalate to Stage 2. If this isn't possible, in agreement with the customer, we'll extend the complaint giving a clear explanation and details of when a response will be received. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason. The Senior Manager investigating the complaint will keep in touch with the customer throughout the process and give them an opportunity to comment on findings before a decision is made.

In the Stage 2 response to the customer, YH will ensure that the customer is advised of the following information:

- the complaint stage.
- the outcome of the complaint.
- the reasons for any decisions made.
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right.

- details of any outstanding actions and how often we'll update the customer on any outstanding actions, to ensure actions are completed satisfactorily.
- details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome.

Complaint remedies and resolutions

YH aims to ensure that any remedy offered in response to a complaint reflects the extent of any and all service failures, and the level of impact caused to the resident as a result. These may include:

- acknowledging where things have gone wrong.
- providing an explanation, assistance or reasons why a certain approach was taken.
- apologising.
- acting if there's been a delay and letting the customer know what will happen and when.
- reconsidering or changing a decision.
- amending a record.
- providing a financial remedy.
- changing policies, procedures or practices.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman will independently review a customer complaint following the outcome of a Stage 2 formal complaint. They'll also offer advice to customers if they're dissatisfied at any point in the complaints process. The customer can contact the Housing Ombudsman directly by:

- Online complaint form: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/.
- Phone: 0300 111 3000.
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk.
- Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L3 7WQ.

Anonymous Complaints and Petitions

Anonymous complaints are not dealt with through the customer feedback policy but will be recorded by the customer resolution team. Depending on the nature of the complaint, we may need to investigate this to protect ours and our customer's interests, especially if it could cause serious detriment. If so, the customer resolution team will review the complaint, complete any necessary actions and record any lessons learned.

Complaints or petitions from groups of customers are accepted. Responses will be sent to all members named in the complaint unless there is a specific request to coordinate through one lead complainant.

Outcomes and learning from anonymous complaints and petitions are reported to the Customer Complaints Forum so that they can review and make recommendations to the Customer Voice and Review Committee as necessary.

Statutory and Regulatory Responsibility

We're committed to ensuring that all personal data is managed in-line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and any associated regulations and codes of conduct. Where a complaint involves a third party, it might be necessary for YH to share the details of the complaint for them to investigate. If the information is sensitive, we'll discuss this with the customer before we share any information. Our Data Protection and Privacy Policy is available upon request.

This policy ensures that YH meets the regulatory and statutory obligations as set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

We also adhere to the requirements in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

We are compliant with Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. More details about the code can be found [here](#). Simply the Code sets out good practice that supports YH to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

YH will carry out annual self-assessments of the code together with the customer complaints forum annually. Read our latest self-assessment [here](#).

Compensation

Where financial compensation is requested or is being considered, each case will be reviewed on its own merits. In-line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code; when awarding compensation, we'll consider whether any statutory payments or quantifiable losses have been incurred. We'll also consider time and trouble and any distress and inconvenience caused.

Unreasonable, persistent and vexatious complainants

YH is committed to providing a customer feedback service that is accessible to all customers, however, on the rare occasion that a customer's actions are found to be unreasonable, we reserve the right to restrict or change this access.

Some customers may make what we consider unreasonable demands if they impact substantially on our services due to the amount of information they seek or provide, the nature and scale of service they expect, or the regularity or number of approaches they make.

Examples of this behaviour include:

- asking for responses within an unreasonable timescale.
- insisting on communicating with a particular colleague.
- continual phone calls, emails, or letters.
- repeatedly changing the substance of the complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- refusal to co-operate with the complaint investigation process while still requesting their complaint be resolved.
- persistent refusal to accept a decision.
- persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what YH can or cannot do.
- continuing to pursue a complaint case without presenting any new information.

Customers who pursue complaints in such a way will be managed using the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy.

Learning from Complaints

YH are committed to learning from customer feedback that we receive and will ensure that feedback is provide at an operational level to service teams across YH to ensure immediate learning on Individual cases.

The customer resolution team will produce regular reports on complaints and lessons learned which are shared with managers, senior leadership teams, Homes and Places Committee and YHL Board. Lessons learned and satisfaction with complaints handling is reviewed and monitored through the customer lens by the customer complaints forum with quarterly reports provided to the Customer Voice and Review Committee. We will include these in our customer annual report, and this will be shared on the YH website.

Reports will highlight themes and trends which will allow senior management to review and identify any systemic issues, serious risks or areas for organisational improvement. Annual reporting to Board will include the Housing Ombudsman's Self-Assessment against the Code.

Training

YH promotes a positive complaint handling culture and the embedding of learning opportunities from feedback. We'll give service-related training to all colleagues, which includes induction and refresher training as appropriate. Additionally, providing specific skills and knowledge training for Stage 2 complaint officers.

Customer Satisfaction

When a complaint is closed, we ask the customer to tell us about their experience of the complaints process. A short customer satisfaction questionnaire will be sent to customers by text or email.

All customer satisfaction results are reported to the Customer Complaints Forum for review and analysis, with recommendations for improvement reported to the relevant service area and to the Customer Voice and Review Committee.

4. Diversity and Inclusion Implications

Fairness and accessibility are key aims of this policy. There are no parts of this policy that have equality and diversity implications on any of the protected characteristics of our customers.

5. Reporting and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect current legislation and any changes to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Compliance is monitored through customer feedback and internal key performance indicators (KPI's).

We have an established method of performance reporting and regularly report on the following to customers, management teams, YHL Board, Homes and Places Committee and Customer Voice and Review Committee:

- Number of complaints, feedback and compliments by stage, type, service area and outcome.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Review of issues and trends.
- Housing Ombudsman enquiries and determinations broken down by theme and service area.
- Lessons learned by service area, type and theme including root causes.
- Implementation of service improvements.

Date approved	30 October 2023
Approved by	Homes and Places Committee
Recommended / scrutinised by	Your Voice Matters Group – Customers
Summary of changes	<p>There are no changes as subject to legislative and regulatory compliance.</p> <p>This policy has been updated in line with new policy format and tone of voice.</p> <p>It also reflects some internal process changes in line with the establishment of a centralised customer resolution team.</p>
Frequency of review	Every 3 years or in line with legislative changes
Next review date	2026
Policy owner	Susan Godbold, Customer Insight and Engagement Manager
Policy author	Angela Havens, Head of Customer Service Delivery

Associated policies or guidelines	Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy Accessible Services Policy YH Internal Complaints and Feedback Guides
Associated procedure	Stage 1 Complaints Handling Procedure Stage 2 Complaints Handling Procedure Suggestion and Feedback Procedure