

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

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Introduction

YMCA Worcestershire (YMCAW) is a small charity and registered provider offering 207 units of accommodation, supported by a small central services team. Of these, 81 units are designated as supported accommodation, while the remaining 126 serve as general needs units. The accommodation is spread across two locations: Worcester, with 43 units, and Redditch, which houses 164 units.

Our vision is to build an inclusive future where everyone can achieve their full potential and live in secure, supportive housing. We recognise that we do not always meet this standard, so it is crucial for our customers to tell us when we fall short, enabling us to learn and improve.

As a small housing association, we do not have a customer service or complaints team, but we do have a small, dedicated team who prioritise tenant welfare and are committed to continuous improvement. We handle all complaints fairly, professionally, and promptly, as they offer valuable insights for service enhancement.

In line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, we are pleased to build this report and share our complaints performance for the 24/25 fiscal year and outline the actions taken.

2024–2025 has been a year of continued development and reflection. We successfully rolled out the changes and actions planned in the previous year, though some initiatives did not deliver the impact we had hoped for. In response, we have worked hard to identify and address those areas, leading to further refinements across our systems, processes, and resources. These improvements are now being embedded and will continue throughout 2025, with full implementation expected by **September 2025**. Our commitment to continuous improvement remains strong, and we are confident that the ongoing changes will deliver meaningful and lasting results.

Complaints for 2024 - 2025

Complaint Element	Number	Percentage
Total Number of Complaints	16	
Number of complaints from supported accommodation	14	88 %
Number of complaints from General needs accommodation	2	12 %
Types of complaints landlord has refused to accept	0	
The service improvements made because of the learning from complaints	4	25 %
Findings of non-compliance with the code by the Ombudsman	0	0 %
Complaints acknowledged within 5 days	16	100 %
Complaints responded to within 10 days	16	100%
Complaints resolved at stage 1	16	100 %
Complaints escalated to stage 2	0	0 %
Complaints Referred to Ombudsman	0	0 %
How many complaints have been identified as needing greater scrutiny at the time of investigation	0	0 %
Complaints about maintenance or cleaning quality	6	38%
Complaints about service /process	6	38 %
Complaints about staff	4	19 %
Other with no category	0	
Complaints by department:		
Maintenance and cleaning	6	38 %
Support	0	0 %
Housing	8	50 %
Management	2	13 %
Contractors	0	0 %

Main Trends

- **25% of complaints came from tenants asked to rehome pets after receiving 3 months' notice.** Staff had advised them informally beforehand, making the effective notice period closer to 5 months. Tenants cited the Renters Reform Bill, despite it not being in effect, and overlooked that they are on excluded licence agreements. While best practice suggests landlords should not unreasonably deny pets, this shared accommodation has small rooms, financial instability among tenants, and a clear no-pets clause in both the tenancy agreement and the landlord's lease with the provider. The senior management team therefore upholds the decision as reasonable. To prevent further upset to tenants, we are now reiterating the house rules in the inductions when a tenant moves in and followed up in the first support session.
- **A significant trend relates to maintenance issues**, including poor communication with tenants, operatives not arriving as scheduled, and incomplete jobs. Further details on how this trend was identified and the steps planned for improvement are outlined in the '**Learning for Service**' section.
- **Steinberg (2014) a specialist psychologist, states that peers are the primary concern for adolescents**, which is reflected in our complaints data. Of our tenants, 48% are aged 16–25. While formal complaints were submitted by 8% of tenants, we received an additional 10 reports through our complaint's channels. This brings overall engagement with the complaints process to 12%. It is important to note that engagement with the complaints process is improving and we are hearing from more tenants.
 - However, these additional reports did not meet the formal Ombudsman definition of a complaint, as they were not related to the service or a failure to act. Instead, they were criticisms or concerns about other tenants. Given the age group and the developmental importance of peer relationships, this trend is to be expected. Our staff continue to respond to these concerns through appropriate support and mediation, rather than through the complaints procedure.
 - Staff will keep scrutiny of these reports to see if there is a service request or ASB report embedded within the peer report which requires separate recoding.

You said, we did!

<p>Maintenance on Call</p>	<p>Tenants weren't able to contact maintenance on call number successfully. The system has now changed so that 24/7 YMCA staff receive the repairs report out of hours from tenants, determine if it's an emergency and then call the personal number of maintenance person on call using a maintenance on call rota which is published on our HR system. Agency are no longer on shift as we have an internal on call system and this ensures increased competency.</p>
<p>Maintenance works not completed on time</p>	<p>There has ben some contention between units that are leased as the landlord of the property was responsible for the repairs, but the YMCA is letting the units to tenants. After seeking advice and liaising with landlord, agreement has been reached, in absence of this being completed YMCA has given advance notice it will have to proceed with repairs.</p>
<p>Maintenance works not completed on time and communication poor</p>	<p>To improve oversight of repairs, we initially introduced an Excel-based tracking log alongside a new non-operational management role. While this provided better visibility and data, there was no trend tracking and it was limited with reporting capabilities.</p> <p>In response, we rolled out a new housing management system in September 2024 to replace the Excel tracker. However, a number of completed jobs were not closed on the system, creating overwhelming number of records and making it difficult to identify and prioritise outstanding repairs. This stemmed from gaps in communication between operatives and the administrator.</p> <p>To strengthen oversight, we have recruited a second non-operational manager with a specific focus on improving repair timescales and communication. A dedicated calendar tool has also been introduced to support better scheduling and task management. We are now also designing work flows for the team to follow.</p> <p>Following these changes, we believe the right infrastructure is now in place and anticipate measurable improvements in repair performance and data accuracy from September 2025 onward.</p>
<p>Difficulty accessing rear garden due to overgrown shrubs</p>	<p>Despite raising with landscaping contractors, there was no improvement, sufficient evidence was gathered and we have now internalised the position to have our own in-house gardeners so that works can be completed on the projects timelier and allow reasonable access to outdoor space.</p>

Learning for the service

Repairs and Maintenance: We initially addressed this area using an Excel-based system but found it unable to cope with the volume of maintenance jobs and lacking sufficient reporting functionality. Recognising the benefits of improved technology, we successfully integrated maintenance management into our new housing management system. In 2024, we also created a non-operational role to enhance management support. This has proven effective, but we identified the need for a dedicated manager to oversee repair timelines, coordination, and tenant feedback. As a result, a new non-operational manager has been appointed and will begin in mid-2025. The 2024–2025 period reflects clear progress from the previous year, and we are confident that 2025–2026 will build on this momentum and deliver further improvements.

Learning for complaint handling

In 2023–2024, we recorded a 5% complaint rate. As outlined in last year's report, we did not interpret this as a sign of success. In line with the Complaints Handling Code, we recognised that this may have reflected a poor complaints culture—one where tenants were reluctant to raise issues, or where complaints were underreported or not properly recorded. The Complaint Code highlights that numbers of complaints are positive for learning, low levels are concerning, it's the tracking, trends and learning that significantly count.

For 2024–2025, we are pleased to report an increased complaint rate to 8%, 60% increase on the number of complaints from the year previous, representing 3% more of the tenants being engaged with the complaints process. If we counted all logs received that were not technically complaints, it would be 12% tenant engagement. This suggests that our complaints channels are being used more effectively, and we hope it reflects growing tenant confidence in being heard and valued. We see this increase as a positive step in our commitment to learning from complaints and improving services.

To enhance our complaints process, we introduced an online complaints form, a dedicated complaints email address, and a QR code to make access easier and more convenient. In addition, we launched housing surgeries to provide face-to-face opportunities for tenants to raise concerns directly with staff. These initiatives reflect our commitment to ensuring tenants can have their voices heard.

Looking ahead to 2025–2026, we anticipate a further rise in complaints, particularly as we launch more housing surgeries aimed at engaging tenants who may not typically interact with staff. Through these efforts, we hope to uncover more opportunities to enhance our services and continue building a culture of openness and continuous improvement.

Conclusion

We are pleased to see an increase in tenant engagement with the complaints reporting channels. While not all submissions met the formal definition of a complaint, the rise in reporting reflects a more engaged tenant network and a positive shift toward a healthier complaints culture. This aligns with our expectations for 2024–2025, following last year’s restructure and system improvements.

All complaints received were low-level concerns and successfully resolved at Stage One. Clear trends emerged, particularly around maintenance and the need for improved communication and organisation. We acknowledge that the significant changes in personnel and the reallocation of resources likely contributed to some service disruption. This has been evident in our internal monitoring and further reinforced by the nature of the complaints received. As such, these areas will be a key focus for improvement in the coming year.

Actions for 2025-2026

- Establish clear workflows for the Maintenance Administrator and Maintenance Manager to ensure defined roles, responsibilities, and consistent handling of maintenance requests.
- Utilise system-generated reports from the new housing management system for continuous monitoring and service improvement. This will allow for early intervention before issues escalate.
- The new Maintenance Manager will work to clear targets focused on improving customer communication and meeting repair completion timescales.
- We will continue to empower tenants to share feedback, recognising that reports received outside the formal complaints definition still offer valuable insights. These submissions help sustain a strong reporting culture, often surfacing early warning signs of potential complaints or anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- Senior management will monitor repair timescales closely to ensure performance remains on track and issues are addressed promptly.

Board Comment

The Board welcomes this report and the improvements made by management since the end of 2023-24. It regularly receives updates on complaints from the senior team and seeks assurances that as well as being compliant with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, we continue to meet our obligations towards our tenants as a YMCA.