

Our residents' charter

YMCA England is a national Christian charity and a registered social landlord. We are committed to helping young people in need, no matter what their race, sex, disability, sexuality or religion. Our housing schemes around the country are managed by local YMCAs and provide safe, secure and affordable accommodation to young people. Our aim is to help residents get the skills they need to live independently.

Below are the housing service standards you can expect to find in all of our housing schemes. If you are not sure about anything, or if you want more information, please ask the staff at your local scheme. You can find contact details at your scheme and in your residents' handbook.

1 Equality and diversity

We will encourage equality and diversity in all our services to make sure that you are not discriminated against or disadvantaged. In simple terms, equality means that everyone should receive the same opportunities and diversity means valuing people's differences.

2 Quality and value of our services

We aim to provide the best service we can. We will regularly review what we are providing to make sure it is a good-quality service and value for money.

3 Applying for accommodation

Our application process is fair. We always try and look at how we can meet your needs.

- We will give you clear information about what our scheme provides, what it costs, and how to apply for accommodation. We will make sure that you can get this information from a range of places and in a variety of formats (such as in large print, different languages and so on).
- Staff will help you to fill in any application forms if you need them to.
- We will acknowledge your application in writing within five working days. In that letter, we will tell you what other information we need, if any, and confirm arrangements for an interview if appropriate.
- We will make a decision within five working days of completing the above application procedure and give you our decision in writing. In the letter, we will give you details about how to appeal if you are not happy with the decision.

4 Moving in to the YMCA

We will give you:

- A written copy of your signed occupancy agreement;
- A clear summary of the rent and other charges you must pay;
- A residents' handbook about living at the YMCA, including information about how and when to pay your rent and how to get help with Housing Benefit;
- An induction into the YMCA by a member of staff, a resident (or both) who will show you around, explain the house rules and give you information about any other services that are available for you to use, such as the laundry; and

- Clean accommodation in a good standard of repair and decoration with all the basic furniture you need (if furniture is provided).

5 Living in the YMCA

We will communicate clearly with you, involve you in managing your home and make sure it is kept to a decent standard.

Rent

- You can pay your rent in cash at your local YMCA office. Some YMCAs will also accept other ways of paying, such as cheque, credit or debit card, standing order or online payment. Local staff at your YMCA will be able to tell you how to pay.
- We will give you a written statement of your rent account at least once a month in clear and simple language.
- We will give you notice in writing before we make any changes to your rent or other charges.

Repairs

- If there is a problem with your accommodation that needs repairing, report it to us and we will repair it within the times set out below.
 - We will carry out emergency repairs within 24 hours.
 - We will carry out urgent repairs within five working days.
 - We will carry out routine repairs within 28 working days.
- If we do not meet these targets, you may be entitled to compensation in line with our complaints and compensation policy.
- We will ask you what you think of the repairs we carry out.

Moving on

We will give you advice and help so that you can find accommodation when it is time for you to move on from the YMCA.

6 Antisocial behaviour

You have a right to live peacefully and quietly in the YMCA and so do your neighbours. We will take appropriate action to manage antisocial behaviour, such as talking to your neighbours, creating 'good behaviour contracts' for residents to keep to, and if necessary, evicting residents who are responsible for antisocial behaviour.

- If you report antisocial behaviour to us, we will discuss the matter with you within five working days or within 24 hours if it is very serious (for example, if it involves claims of racial or sexual harassment or violence).

- We will take immediate action if necessary, such as helping you to contact the police or other outside agencies if appropriate.

- We will remove racist or other offensive graffiti within 24 hours of it being reported.

- In all cases of reported antisocial behaviour, we will complete any necessary further investigations within five working days of speaking to you. We will confirm in writing what action we have already taken and, if we need to take further action, when we will carry this out.

- We will make follow-up contact with you no later than a month after we have dealt with the matter, to make sure that the action taken has worked.

- If we have not been able to meet any of these timeframes, we will tell you why.

7 Keeping you informed

We will give you fair and accurate information about your accommodation, your rights and responsibilities with us, and our performance as your landlord.

- We will tell you about anything that may affect your accommodation (for example if there is going to be noisy work nearby).
- We will tell you at least twice a year in tenants' newsletters and on our website how we have performed against the standards set out in this charter.
- We will keep all your information confidential in line with the Data Protection Act. We will not share it with other organisations without your permission unless we have to by law.
- We will tell you about any circumstances or behaviour that could lead to you losing your accommodation (for example, if you do not pay your rent).

8 Having your say and getting involved

We will offer you a range of ways to get involved in running the YMCA's housing services.

- We will tell you how you can get involved in managing your accommodation.
- We will regularly ask you in person and in writing if there are any issues you want to raise with us. We will ask you this on your own and in groups.
- We will ask for your opinion on changes that may affect you, for example, new colour schemes for shared areas.

- We will regularly ask you how well you think we have done in meeting these housing service standards. We will tell you what other residents thought and how we have used your feedback to improve our services at a local and national level.

9 Complaints and compensation

We will try to make our services the best they can be. If you are not happy with any part of our service, we want to know. We will make sure that our complaints procedure is clear and easy for everyone to use and we will respond to your complaint quickly and politely.

- We will make sure that you know what to do if you want to make a complaint and give you a copy of the procedure in a format that is suitable for you.
- The procedure explains how we deal with complaints and how long it takes us. It is in your residents' handbook and can be summarised as follows.
 - The complaint should first go to the Housing Manager at your local YMCA, who will consider it and respond in writing within five working days.
 - If you are not satisfied with the reply, you can write to the Chief Executive of your local YMCA, who will reply in writing within 10 working days.
 - If you are still not happy, you can write to the Chairperson of your local YMCA, who will reply in writing within 15 working days.
 - If you are still not happy, you can write to the Director of Housing at YMCA England, who will reply in writing within 15 working days.
- We will monitor and analyse all complaints we receive to see if we need to make any changes to our practices, policies or procedures.
- If we think the reason for your complaint has caused you loss (for example if someone carrying out a repair damaged your belongings), we may give you compensation in line with our complaints and compensation policy.

