



# YMCA England Residents' Handbook

Designed & produced by YMCA England © May 2008

The YMCA is a Christian charity committed to helping young people, particularly at times of need, regardless of gender, race, ability or faith. National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (Incorporated). A Limited Company registered in London no. 73749. Reg office: 640 Forest Road, London E17 3DZ. Charity no. 212810. [www.ymca.org.uk](http://www.ymca.org.uk)

# YMCA England Residents' Handbook

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This section contains information about living in your local YMCA. If the information you need is not included, you will receive a separate document from your local YMCA.

Please note that Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark does not apply to part 2 of this handbook or the separate document.



**On behalf of everyone involved at the YMCA, we would like to welcome you to your new home. We hope that however long you stay with us, it is a wonderful experience for you.**

We believe that everyone who comes here brings their own special qualities, experiences and unique personality.

We encourage you to share your special qualities with us, other residents and the wider community. You will find that at the YMCA there are many opportunities for you to make your own valuable contribution.

We value your previous experiences, good and bad. Your experiences have helped to make you the person you are, and this is important both here and in your life beyond the YMCA. Living at the YMCA will be an opportunity for you to gain new experiences and we hope that you will benefit from this as much as possible.

We have a lot to offer because people don't just live here, they also add something extra to the life and soul of the place.

## A: About this handbook

This handbook includes information that will help you to enjoy living at the YMCA and in this neighbourhood. The handbook is divided into two main parts. The first part contains information that applies to all YMCA England residents, whichever part of England you live in. The second part is about your local YMCA in particular.

### **In this handbook, you will find advice on:**

- how to cope with your rent payments and financial help that is available if you need it;
- what to do if you need repairs to your home;
- how to get involved; and
- a whole range of other important information.

We do not expect you to read the whole handbook immediately. Just look through it to get some idea of the contents and, most importantly, keep it in a safe place to refer to in the future.

If you need help or advice on any issue, whether it's related to living at the YMCA or anything else, please contact your local YMCA staff. That is what they're there for. Contact details for your local YMCA staff are included in part 2 of this handbook.

We would like to thank all the staff and residents who helped to produce this handbook. If you would like to contribute to the next edition, please contact us.

We hope you enjoy your stay at the YMCA.

**The Housing Department**  
**YMCA England**

## A: Who is the YMCA?

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 for young people. Our aim is to help residents get the skills they need to live independently.

### **We have the following aims.**

- A worldwide fellowship based on everyone being equal.
- Respect, freedom, acceptance and understanding for everyone.
- Concern for the needs of the community.
- Christians from different traditions, united in their efforts to respond to the needs of the community.

### **We have the following values.**

- Valuing each person, especially young people.
- Welcoming everyone.
- Encouraging people to accept and understand others.
- Being open, fair, honest and responsible for our actions.
- Learning from experience.
- Being flexible and willing to change.

## B: YMCA England housing

We own the home you have moved into, and your local YMCA manages it on our behalf. This means that we are your landlord and the agreement you have signed for your home is between you and us. In most matters relating to your stay at the YMCA, your local YMCA acts on our behalf and will work directly with you.

## **C: YMCA England office address**

If you need to contact a member of our Housing Department team, the details are as follows.

**The Housing Department  
YMCA England  
Colman House  
Station Road  
Knowle  
Solihull  
B93 0HL**

**Phone:** 01564 730229

**Fax:** 01564 770976

**E-mail:** [admin.housing@england.ymca.org.uk](mailto:admin.housing@england.ymca.org.uk)

## **D: Opening hours**

Your local YMCA opening times are shown in part 2 of this handbook. The YMCA England office is open from 9am to 5pm.

## **E: Your tenancy or licence agreement**

Depending on the type of accommodation you are living in, as well as the level of housing services you are entitled to, your contract to live at the YMCA will either be a tenancy or licence. This is the legal contract you sign that gives you the right to live in your home at the YMCA. It tells you your rights and responsibilities. It also tells you what we have to do as your landlord.

### **As a resident, you have the right:**

- to enjoy your home in peace;
- to have repairs done;
- not to be annoyed, upset or frightened by anyone else in your home; and
- to complain if you are not happy with your home.

**As a resident, you also have a responsibility:**

- to pay your rent;
- not to be violent or aggressive to other people because of their race, age, disability, sex or for any other reason;
- not to cause a nuisance to anyone else in your home, any visitors, support staff or your neighbours;
- not to play music or your TV so loudly that it disturbs other people, including your neighbours; and
- not to cause damage to the furniture and fittings in your home.

The tenancy or licence agreement also tells you what our responsibilities are as your landlord.

**F: House rules**

Your local YMCA will have 'house rules' that they have developed to make sure that living at the YMCA is as positive and enjoyable an experience as possible. For details of these rules, see part 2 of this handbook.

**G: Moving into a place of your own**

Becoming a YMCA resident and having a place of your own for the first time involves major changes. It is often a very exciting period and will solve problems that you may have had because you were homeless or in temporary accommodation.

But, you may find the move stressful at times, or you may feel that you are all alone. These experiences are very common when people are moving home and you will get over them. It is quite common to miss what you have been used to when you make such a major change. Don't suffer in silence! Your local YMCA staff understand how you are feeling and they are happy to listen and, if appropriate, offer you advice. That's part of why they are there.

It can be very rewarding and enjoyable moving into a place of your own and making it feel like home. It gives you the chance for a new beginning and the peace of mind that comes with being able to shut your own front door.



## A: Our residents' charter

What you can expect from us is set out in 'Our residents' charter'. We consider this to be an important document and the housing staff at your local YMCA will give you a separate copy. You can also find it on our housing website and on posters in your local YMCA.

### **Our residents' charter** **Important service standards for residents** **in YMCA England's housing schemes**

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.

## **B: Confidentiality and data protection**

We do not pass on any of the information we hold about you or our staff without your or their permission, unless we have to under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. You can ask to look at the information we hold about you. If some of the information we hold about you was provided in confidence by someone else, we will tell you where the information is held and refer you to the person who supplied it.

If you do not agree with any of the information we hold about you, we will correct it or make a note that you disagree with it (depending on the information involved).

## **C: YMCA support services**

### **What are support services?**

When you move into one of our properties, you will meet a housing or support worker who will assess any support needs that you may have. These could be anything from help claiming Housing Benefit to help with more personal problems. If you need specialist help (for example, help with reading, writing or maths) your housing or support worker will discuss this with you and, if you agree, refer you to the relevant agency.

Housing or support workers are there to deal with any issues that you may have, including:

- difficulties getting used to living in a community;
- help with claiming benefits or dealing with associated problems;
- personal and health worries; and
- anything else you may want to discuss.

Housing or support workers are available at most times between 9am and 5pm. Just call into the office or reception to make an appointment.

**A: What is rent?**

Rent is money you pay to us. The money pays for your home and includes a service charge (see 4E). If you want to carry on living in your flat or room, you will have to pay rent.

**B: How much rent will you have to pay?**

The amount of rent you pay depends on the type of home you live in and where you live. If you want more information on how we work out your rent, please contact staff at your local YMCA.

**C: Rent review**

Once a year, we review the rent you pay for the next 12 months. We will always write to you one month before your rent changes to let you know how much it will be. If you get Housing Benefit, we will write to your local council to tell them how much your rent will be. The council can then change the amount of Housing Benefit you get. You must also tell your local council about any change to your rent.

**D: What we spend your rent on**

We will use your rent to:

- pay for the repairs to your home;
- pay back the money we borrowed to buy your home; and
- employ staff to manage your home.

**E: Service charges**

The total amount of rent that you pay also includes:

- a housing service charge; and
- a personal service charge.

Your housing service charge pays for shared services. This means the parts of the building that you share with other people, such as hallways, stairs and lifts, and does not include your own flat or room. Your service charge could include a charge for:

- heating and lighting shared rooms or areas;
- cleaning shared areas like the lounge, laundry or corridors;

- cleaning some windows;
- maintaining the garden area;
- some furniture and kitchen appliances;
- decorating shared areas like the residents' lounge; and
- a shared phone.

Your personal service charge pays for services within your home, for example your heating costs and the water you use.

### **F: What your rent does not pay for**

- Your support worker.
- Your household bills.
- Insuring your personal belongings.

### **G: How to pay your rent**

You should pay your rent every Monday for the week to come. You may be able to pay your rent each month, but this must be for the month to come (not the month just gone). You may be able to pay your rent in cash, by cheque or by direct debit.

If you do not get full Housing Benefit and you have to pay all or some of your rent, please tell your local YMCA housing staff how you would prefer to pay your rent.

### **H: What is Housing Benefit?**

Housing Benefit is money that you may be entitled to from your local council to help you pay your rent. The council would pay the money direct to us as your landlord. Before you move into your home, you will need to fill in a claim form. Based on what you say in your claim form, your local council will decide whether you are entitled to Housing Benefit. They will look at how much income you get each week and how much you have in savings. This will help them decide if you are entitled to Housing Benefit. They may not pay all of your rent but they may pay something towards it. If you need help filling in your claim form, a housing staff member from your local YMCA should be able to help you.

## I: Important information about Housing Benefit

- It is very important that you claim Housing Benefit before you move into your home.
- If you hand your form in late, the council will not pay your rent from the day you moved in. This means that you would have to pay the rent yourself until the council makes a decision about your claim.
- This could mean that you fall behind with your rent, which is very serious as you could lose your home.
- It is your responsibility to make sure that your rent is paid in full, even if you get Housing Benefit.
- You must tell the Housing Benefit office if your circumstances change. For example, if your income goes up.
- When you apply for Housing Benefit, you will need to provide proof of your identity and proof of your income and savings.
- If you are getting any other state benefit, such as Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support, this does not mean that you are automatically entitled to Housing Benefit. You will still need to fill in a Housing Benefit claim form.
- Hand in your claim form as soon as possible. Housing Benefit is paid from the next Monday after your form is handed in. Any delay could mean that you lose benefit.

## J: Other information we need from you

- You will need to include a copy of your tenancy or licence agreement with your claim for Housing Benefit.
- If you are getting any other state benefit, the Housing Benefit office will confirm this with whichever department you are receiving benefit from.
- If you are paid each week, you will need to supply your last five wage slips.
- If you are paid each month, you will need to supply your last two wage slips.
- If you have recently started work and have not received a wage slip, ask your employer to fill in and return the certificate of earnings form that will come with your claim form.
- When you hand in your claim form at the Housing Benefit office, always ask for a receipt.

## **K: What will happen if you don't pay your rent**

If you don't pay your rent each week, you will fall behind with your payments. If you are getting Housing Benefit towards your rent and this stops for some reason, you will also fall behind with your rent. This means that you will owe money to us, your landlord. Not paying your rent can be very serious and you could lose your home. Housing staff at your local YMCA will be happy to work with you if you get behind with your rent to stop things becoming more serious. If you have any difficulties paying your rent, our staff are there to help you.

## **L: Council Tax**

Depending on the type of accommodation you are living in, you may also need to pay Council Tax. This tax pays for local government services (for example, rubbish collection, street lighting and the police). If you live in shared accommodation, your local YMCA will probably be responsible for paying Council Tax on your behalf. If you live in self-contained accommodation (in other words, you don't share it), you will probably have to pay Council Tax yourself. You may be entitled to receive Council Tax Benefit.

- To apply for Council Tax Benefit, you need to contact the Council Tax section of your local council and give them the information they ask for to assess whether you are entitled to the benefit. If you are getting certain other benefits or if you are on a low income, you will be eligible for Council Tax Benefit. As a single person living on your own, you will automatically qualify for a 25% discount on your Council Tax.
- You must reply to all the letters you receive from the Council Tax section. They will divide your yearly bill into 10 payments (there is usually no payment in February and March each year). If you miss a payment without letting the council know why, they can ask you to pay the full amount for the year and take you to court if necessary. If you have any concerns, talk to the housing staff at your local YMCA or contact the Council Tax section at your local council. For contact details, see part 2 in this handbook.

**A: Moving in**

When you move into your home, a YMCA staff member will go through a list with you of all the furniture and fittings in the property. They will ask you to agree with the list and sign it, and then give you a copy.

**B: How to get things repaired when they go wrong**

When things get broken and need repairing, it is important that you tell staff at your local YMCA straight away so that they can deal with the problem quickly. Don't just mention it to a staff member in passing as they may forget. You need to report the problem at reception so that staff can record it and give it a 'priority'. (This means deciding whether it is an emergency, urgent or routine repair.) We are committed to dealing quickly with any repairs and we have a clear policy in terms of priorities and times within which we deal with repairs.

**C: Whose responsibility is it?**

You and we (YMCA England and your local YMCA) are jointly responsible for keeping your home in a good state of repair. However, if you or your visitors damage the property in any way, you will be responsible for paying for any repair costs.

**D: What repairs we are responsible for**

We and your local YMCA are responsible for keeping the following in reasonable repair and fit for use.

- The building's structure and its outside appearance (including any gardens).
- The installations (for example, the central-heating system).
- The shared areas (for example, the stairs, hallways and shared lounges).
- The furniture and fittings we supply, which are on the list you see when you move in.

## **E: Your responsibilities**

Your maintenance responsibilities are set out in your tenancy or licence agreement and listed below.

### **1: Damage**

You must keep your home and the rest of the premises clean and tidy, and pay our costs for repairing any damage to your home or the fixtures, fittings and furnishings provided, or to the shared areas, if you or any of your visitors have caused the damage. We do not include fair wear and tear. Only YMCA employees and contractors are authorised to carry out repairs, maintenance or alterations to your home or our fixtures, fittings and furnishings.

### **2: Reporting damage or a fault**

You must report to us as soon as possible any damage or fault that we are responsible for repairing in the structure of the building or outside the premises, or in any installation in your home or in the shared parts.

### **3: Access**

You must allow YMCA employees or contractors into your home at all reasonable times of the day to inspect its condition or to carry out repairs or other work.

### **4: Insuring your property**

We are responsible for insuring the structure of your home against fire, flood and storm damage or other insured risk. If your home is damaged, we will use the insurance money we receive to put your home back to the way it was as soon as possible. You can decide whether or not to insure the contents of your room. We strongly recommend that you insure all your personal belongings and that you get third-party cover to protect you against damage to your neighbour's property (for example, if your home floods and damages your neighbour's property too). This insurance cover should not be too expensive and you can get advice from any good insurance company.

## **F: How long will it take to get things repaired?**

This will depend on the priority of the repair.

### **Priority 1 – Emergencies**

(For the emergency repairs phone number, see part 2 of this handbook.)

These are repairs needed to avoid an immediate danger to health or a risk to the safety of residents or staff, or serious damage to the building. Your local YMCA aims to carry out these repairs within 24 hours. Sometimes, the local YMCA staff will make them safe until the next working day and then do a full repair.

Examples of emergency repairs include burst pipes, a burst water tank and no electricity.

If you have an emergency repair, you must report it immediately. If it happens outside normal office hours, ring the number shown in part 2 of this handbook.

When you call to report a repair, please give your phone number, especially if you are in a public phone box.

### **Priority 2 – Urgent**

These are repairs that are not considered to be an emergency but which affect your comfort and convenience. Your local YMCA aims to carry out these repairs within five working days. Examples of urgent repairs include blocked or leaking waste pipes, faulty plug sockets, leaking overflow pipes and radiators not heating up.

### **Priority 3 – Routine**

Routine repairs are repairs that are not emergencies or urgent but are necessary to maintain the quality of the building. The YMCA aims to carry out these repairs within 28 working days.

Examples of routine repairs include plaster work, easing doors and windows and guttering repairs.

## **G: What will happen when you report a repair or fault**

You can report a repair by calling in at reception, by phone or e-mail. When you report a repair you will be given a receipt or a number confirming your request for repairs and the date on which you made the request. Your local YMCA will confirm your request by letter, giving the priority of repair and when they expect to complete the work. Unless you say otherwise, your local YMCA will assume that you give their staff permission to enter your home to carry out the repair even if you are not there. If you want to be there, please contact reception to make arrangements.

## **H: Repairs satisfaction form**

This system for reporting and dealing with repairs is to make sure that you get a high-quality and efficient maintenance service. To help us with this, the local YMCA maintenance staff will leave a repairs satisfaction form with you when they carry out the repair. Please fill in this form and return it to reception.

We want to know:

- if you were happy with how the repair was carried out;
- if the maintenance worker was polite and respectful; and
- if the maintenance worker did a good job.

This information is very important to us as it will help us improve our repairs service. As part of our feedback to you, we will tell you the outcome of these repairs satisfaction forms. It is very important that you tell us what you think about our repairs service.

## **I: The yearly maintenance inspection**

Once a year, we will carry out an inspection of our housing schemes to look at the general state of the building. If we find any repairs that need doing, we will add them to either the day-to-day repairs schedule or the programme of planned maintenance.

## **J: Planned maintenance**

We and your local YMCA have to plan ahead to maintain some parts of your home. We call this the planned maintenance programme.

There are two types of planned maintenance:

- cyclical repairs; and
- major repairs.

**1: A cyclical repair** is work that the local YMCA repeats once a year or sometimes less often. For example:

- servicing gas appliances; and
- painting the outside of your home.

**2: The major repairs programme** is where we plan to replace major items in the housing scheme, such as:

- windows;
- kitchen units;
- bathrooms; and
- roofs.

## **K: Your right to get things repaired**

You have a right to expect us to repair things that we are responsible for within the set times shown in section 5F above.

## **L: Compensation**

Compensation is money that we may pay to you (in line with our complaints and compensation policy) if we do not carry out certain repairs within the set times. If we have not repaired something and it has put your health, safety or security at risk, you may be entitled to compensation.

If you think you may be entitled to compensation, please contact the housing staff at your local YMCA. They will tell you more about the repairs covered under this scheme and how you can claim compensation.

Please do not arrange for somebody else to do the work instead of us. If you ask somebody else to do the work, you will have to pay their bill yourself.

## **M: Adapting your home to make it easier to live there**

If you have a disability that makes day-to-day living in your home difficult, we may be able to help you by adapting your home to make it easier for you to live there (for example, fitting handrails or a walk-in shower). Before we will consider adaptations for your home, we will need a recommendation from your doctor or occupational therapist.

## **A: Fire safety**

In most of our housing schemes, the local YMCA provides fire extinguishers and fire blankets. They will service all the fire equipment once a year to make sure that it is working properly and safe to use.

## **B: Fire drills**

Your local YMCA is responsible for carrying out regular fire drills, where appropriate. This is so you know how to get out of your home safely if there is a fire. See part 2 of this handbook for more information.

## **C: Health and safety rules**

Your local YMCA will be able to tell you what the health and safety rules are for your home. Health and safety rules are there to make sure you are safe in your home. See part 2 of this handbook.

Some typical examples of health and safety rules are:

- not blocking the doorways in your building – if you see a blocked doorway, tell your local YMCA staff; and
- not leaving things on the floor that people could trip over and so hurt themselves.

It is as much your responsibility as ours to make sure you stick to the health and safety rules.

## **D: Find out where equipment is**

You will need to know where certain things are in your home such as stopcocks and electricity circuit breakers. This is so that you can turn them off quickly in an emergency. You can make a note of where they are in the table below.

**Stopcock**

---

**Electricity circuit breaker**

---

**Trip switch (if there is one)**

---

**Central-heating boiler**

---

**Hot-water cylinder**

---

**Cold-water storage tank**

---

## **E: Testing appliances**

We may own some of the electrical equipment in your home but some of it will belong to you. Your local YMCA will test the electrical equipment we own once a year to make sure it is safe. This equipment will include fridges and washing machines.

## **A: Getting on with your neighbours and the people you live with**

Sometimes people have problems with their neighbours. If you have a problem, talk to your support worker or another member of your local YMCA housing staff and ask them to help you sort it out.

## **B: Antisocial behaviour**

Antisocial behaviour can take many forms. It can be aimed at one person or a group of people, but does not include a personal attack against one particular person. It is important to remember that the person causing the nuisance may not be aware that they are disturbing others.

Examples of antisocial behaviour include:

- playing loud music;
- banging and slamming doors;
- dumping rubbish; and
- allowing people you don't know into shared areas.

## **C: Hate crimes**

A hate crime is behaviour that deliberately intends to harm or intimidate one particular person. It is often motivated by prejudice because of someone's race, colour, ethnic background, religion, sex, age, disability or sexuality. You must not harass your neighbours, their visitors or YMCA employees (including our contractors) because of their race, colour, religion, sex, sexuality, age, disability or medical condition.

Examples of harassment include:

- verbal abuse;
- using or threatening to use violence;
- using an animal, such as an aggressive dog, to threaten another person;
- using abusive, racist or insulting words or behaviour;
- threatening or abusive letters, phone calls or e-mails;
- physical assaults or damage to property, including graffiti; and
- doing anything that interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of other people.

If you commit, cause or threaten a hate crime against your neighbours, their visitors or YMCA employees, your local YMCA might end your licence agreement or, if you are a tenant, take legal action against you that could lead to you losing your home. Your local YMCA will usually report any criminal act to the police. For more information, please contact your local YMCA staff.

## **D: Domestic violence**

Domestic violence is threatened or actual violence carried out by one person against another within the home.

Examples of this kind of behaviour include violence:

- from an ex-partner of one of our residents who does not live with them;
- between brothers and sisters;
- between parents and children; or
- between people who share a home.

Domestic violence can be physical, verbal or emotional. It can be against men or women, and adults or children. If you commit, cause or threaten domestic violence against anyone who lives in one of our properties, your local YMCA might end your licence or, if you are a tenant, take legal action against you. If you are the victim of domestic violence, it is important that you get independent legal advice to make sure that you know all of your options before you take any action.

## **E: How we deal with unacceptable behaviour**

We will not accept any antisocial behaviour or hate crime against an individual or group of people. Your local YMCA will take all reports of such behaviour very seriously, and will support those people who are suffering from the reported behaviour. If a criminal act has taken place, your local YMCA will usually tell the police.

You are responsible for the behaviour of everyone visiting your home. This includes behaviour in the shared areas and anywhere else within our properties. You risk losing your home if you, or your visitors, have caused or continue to cause antisocial behaviour, or commit hate crimes or domestic violence. Your local YMCA will investigate all incidents that are reported to them. If you are responsible for unacceptable behaviour, we may take legal action against you and you could lose your home (if you are a tenant) or we may end your licence.

### **F: What to do if you are experiencing unacceptable behaviour**

If you are experiencing antisocial behaviour, hate crimes or domestic violence, report it to the housing staff at your local YMCA. They will investigate your complaint and tell you about any action we can take. You should also report it to the police if it involves actual or threatened violence, damage to property or another criminal act. Your local YMCA will support you to do this, if you would like them to.

If any incident has taken place, take a photo of anything that could be used as evidence and make a note of:

- the time and place;
- details of what happened;
- the names of any witnesses;
- the effect on you; and
- the name and number of the police officer, if you called one.

### **G: What we can do**

Your local YMCA housing staff will work closely with you to investigate any reports of antisocial behaviour, hate crimes and domestic violence, and they will take action. Your local YMCA will arrange for any racist graffiti to be removed within 24 hours of it being reported.

### **1: Legal action**

If you are the victim of this kind of behaviour, your local YMCA will work with you to find the best solution for you. They will offer you support and put you in touch with specialist support organisations. If they have enough evidence, your local YMCA will take action against any residents who are responsible for the behaviour.

## **2: Possession order**

Depending on whether the resident responsible for the unacceptable behaviour has a tenancy or licence, we may either end their licence or take them to court for a possession order against them as they will have broken their tenancy conditions. Depending on how serious the case is, we may get a suspended possession order from the court. This means that the tenant can stay in their home as long as they keep to the conditions of the court order and do not repeat any of the unacceptable behaviour. If they break these conditions, we will go straight back to court and start proceedings to get them out of our property.

## **3: Injunctions**

If the resident is a tenant, we may consider taking out an injunction against them. This is a court order that forces them to follow the terms of their tenancy agreement. In extremely serious cases where the tenant is a threat to the safety of other residents, we may be able to get a temporary injunction order at very short notice. If the resident has a licence, we do not need to go to court to end their licence.

## **4: Antisocial behaviour order (ASBO)**

We may consider getting an antisocial behaviour order (ASBO) against a resident or their visitors. An ASBO is a court order that can stop unacceptable behaviour or ban a visitor from an area. Your local YMCA will work closely with the police and local authorities if they are considering taking this action.

## **A: Why we have a complaints procedure**

We take complaints very seriously and we have developed the following procedure for two reasons.

- 1 It gives people who are not satisfied with our service (residents or their visitors) a way of getting things put right.
- 2 It gives us a way of monitoring and checking our own performance, and getting feedback to see how we can improve and maintain our services and relationship with our residents and the public.

### **B: When to complain**

If you are not happy with something, tell us. You should complain if you feel we have:

- not done something we should have done;
- treated you unfairly or impolitely;
- done something we should not have done; or
- done something badly.

### **C: Who can complain**

You don't have to be one of our residents to complain about our service. You may want someone to help you make your complaint. This could be a friend, relative or support worker.

If you would like a copy of our complaints leaflet, please ask your local YMCA for a copy.

### **D: Informal complaints procedure**

Some people don't want to make a formal complaint. They prefer to tell their local YMCA staff by phone or face-to-face. If you prefer to keep your complaint informal, the local YMCA staff will still listen to you and try to put right whatever it is that you are not happy about. Only YMCA housing staff can deal with complaints, not volunteers or temporary staff.

### **E: Formal complaints procedure**

If you choose to make a formal complaint, or if you are not happy with the way your local YMCA dealt with your informal complaint, please use the following procedure.

### **Stage 1: How to make a formal complaint**

Please fill in a complaints form, which you can get from reception at your local YMCA.

You should address your complaint to the Housing Manager, or the staff member with overall responsibility for housing, at your local YMCA's main office. For contact details, please see part 2 of this handbook.

The local YMCA staff will consider your written complaint and send you a reply in writing within five working days of receiving it.

### **Stage 2: What to do if you are not happy**

If you are not satisfied with their written reply, you can write to the Chief Executive of your local YMCA (see part 2 of this handbook) and mark your letter 'Private'.

He or she will send you a written reply within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.

### **Stage 3: What to do if you are still not happy**

If you are still not happy with their reply, you can write to the chairperson of your local YMCA (see part 2 of this handbook).

He or she will send you a written reply within 15 working days of receiving your complaint.

### **Stage 4: And if you are still not happy**

If you are still not happy after stage 3, you can write or send an e-mail to:

**The Director of Housing**  
**YMCA England**  
**Development and Housing Department**  
**Colman House**  
**Station Road**  
**Knowle**  
**Solihull**  
**B93 0HL**

**E-mail:** [admin.housing@england.ymca.org.uk](mailto:admin.housing@england.ymca.org.uk)

The Director of Housing will consider your complaint and send you a written reply within 15 working days of receiving your complaint.

### **Stage 5: Other action you can take**

If you have been through our formal complaints procedure with a housing-related complaint and you are still not satisfied with the way we have dealt with it, you can complain to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Independent Housing Ombudsman is the person who deals with complaints about all housing associations in England. The ombudsman won't investigate your complaint until you have followed our complaints procedure.

You can contact the ombudsman as follows.

Write to:

**The Housing Ombudsman Service,**  
**81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN**  
**Phone:** 020 7421 3800  
**Lo-call:** 0845 7125 973  
**Fax:** 020 7831 1942  
**E-mail:** [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

### **A: What is resident involvement?**



We believe that involving our residents in what we do is an important part of our service and we are committed to actively involving you in planning and delivering our services. Our vision is to involve young people and whole communities in creating and improving places to live where everyone feels welcome, valued, respected and secure, and where they can develop in body, mind and spirit.

There are opportunities for you to get involved in planning, delivering and monitoring our services, and also in the future direction of your local YMCA, and the work of the YMCA nationally and internationally.

### **B: Why should you get involved?**

Involving residents is vital to improving our services and it brings many benefits.

- Services are more likely to meet your needs if you have helped to plan them.
- You are more likely to be satisfied with our services and the neighbourhood you live in.
- You will have a better understanding of the limits within which we have to work, such as financial limits.
- You can learn new skills, make new friends and help to make a difference for all residents.

### **C: How do you get involved?**

Your local YMCA can offer you a range of ways in which you can get involved, and may include the following.

- Being members of residents' committees or forums.
- Being residents' representatives at housing sub-committees and the board of management.
- Contributing to our residents' handbook, residents' newsletter, suggestion boxes, attending meetings and having direct contact with service staff.
- Filling in service questionnaires and surveys twice a year – the outcomes are reported to our residents and our Housing Department.
- Completing 'exit' interviews and questionnaires (carried out when a resident leaves) – the outcomes are reported to our Housing Department.
- Attending one-to-one meetings with staff.
- Attending individual service residents' meetings.
- Making complaints – the details will be reported to our Housing Department.

Please see part 2 of this handbook.

### **D: Keeping you informed**

We will use newsletters and other forms of communication to provide you with a range of information including information on our services, policies and performance.

### **E: Have we got it right?**

We will monitor the levels of interest our residents show in different ways of being involved and we will always consider new ideas.

### **F: Finding out more**

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the above, please contact staff at your local YMCA.

### **A: Giving up your tenancy or licence**

You need to tell staff at your local YMCA, in writing, if you want to move out of your home. You must normally give us four weeks' notice in writing, starting on a Monday. Before you leave you will need to remove all your personal belongings and leave your flat or room clean and tidy.

### **B: What if we end your tenancy or licence?**

We can only end your tenancy and ask you to move out if we get a court order. If you have a licence, we don't need a court order to end your licence. Depending on the reasons why we are ending your tenancy or licence, your local YMCA will usually give you two weeks' notice in writing if they intend to end your tenancy or licence.

The following are examples of why we might end your tenancy or licence.

- You owe rent and are not making efforts to pay it.
- You have broken one of the conditions of your tenancy or licence agreement.
- You have caused serious damage to your home.
- You have threatened other people living in our properties.



You will find three feedback sheets in this section of the handbook. We would really appreciate it if you could fill in these sheets, which cover the following points.

- What do you think of the YMCA?
- Would you like to be involved with the YMCA?
- What do you think about this residents' handbook?

Please note that Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark does not apply to the feedback sheets.



## Feedback Sheet: 1

### What do you think of the YMCA?

#### 1. When applying for accommodation at the YMCA, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the application process?

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Fairly satisfied
- c) Neither
- d) Fairly dissatisfied
- e) Very dissatisfied

#### 2. When moving into the YMCA how helpful did you find the staff?

- a) Very helpful
- b) Fairly helpful
- c) Neither
- d) Fairly unhelpful
- e) Very unhelpful

#### 3. Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the services provided by the YMCA?

- a) Very satisfied
- b) Fairly satisfied
- c) Neither
- d) Fairly dissatisfied
- e) Very dissatisfied

#### 4. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following?

*Tick **one** box only for each of the following:*

**NOTE: 1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither, 5 = Very Unsatisfied**

- |   | <b>1</b>              | <b>2</b>              | <b>3</b>              | <b>4</b>              | <b>5</b>              |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) The overall quality of your home               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) The general condition of any communal areas    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) The general condition of any shared facilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) The neighbourhood as a place to live           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) The value for money for your rent              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Continued overleaf...

**5. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following services provided by the YMCA?**

*Tick one box only for each of the following:*

**NOTE: 1 = Very Satisfied, 3 = Neither, 5 = Very Unsatisfied**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
a) Advice on rent payments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Advice on benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Advice on moving home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) Your support plan (if applies)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) How enquiries are dealt with generally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**6. Of the following, which do you consider to be the three most important?**

- a) Keeping residents informed
- b) Overall quality of your home
- c) Taking residents' views into account
- d) Repairs and maintenance
- e) Neighbourhood as a place to live
- f) Value for money for your rent
- g) Your support worker (if applies)
- h) Your support plan (if applies)
- i) Support services overall

**Thank you for completing this feedback sheet.  
Please hand it in at reception.**



## Feedback Sheet: 3

What do you think of this residents' handbook?

### 1 Comments on content

Section

1	
2	
3	
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5	
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7	
8	
9	
10	
11	

### 2 Comments on style and presentation


**Thank you for completing this feedback sheet.  
Please hand it in at reception.**

## **This section contains information about living in your local YMCA.**

If the information you need is not included, you will receive a separate document from your local YMCA.

Please note that Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark does not apply to part 2 of this handbook or the separate document.

