



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Date of approval:	02/06/2021
Next date for review:	02/06/2022



1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 YWCA Ireland is constantly working to improve the services we provide. If you believe that we have not given you the best possible service then tell us about it. Your complaints give us the information we need to improve our services for you and for others. YWCA Ireland is committed to taking seriously any complaint that concerned individuals have about your interaction with the organisation.
- 1.2 A complaint may be defined as 'A statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.' www.oxforddictionaries.com
- 1.3 This policy is intended to ensure that a formal process for registering complaints is put in place and that all complaints are taken seriously and addressed in an appropriate and professional manner.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy covers the process and all actions to be taken in respect to a complaint by a concerned individual. Complaints can be made in respect of any aspect of YWCA Ireland's service delivery.
- 2.2 YWCA Ireland will seek to ensure that:
- there are clear lines of accountability for the handling and consideration of complaints within the organisation'
 - complainants have open and easy access to the organisation's complaints policy and information required to enable them to complain about any aspect of service;
 - complaints are dealt with through an efficient and effective process;
 - all investigations are conducted promptly, thoroughly, openly, honestly and objectively;
 - complaints are responded to as promptly as possible and all issues raised are addressed;
 - YWCA Ireland promotes a culture of learning from complaints so that, where necessary, service, processes and practices can be improved.
- 2.3 In addition, YWCA Ireland will:
- ensure that all positive comments are passed on to the relevant staff members;
 - process all complaints in a fair, consistent and unbiased manner;
 - endeavour to communicate with the concerned individual within agreed timeframes throughout the process;
 - ensure no concerned individual is disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint;
 - respect confidentiality and protect concerned individuals' data in line with legislation; and
 - monitor and review complaints and compliments for quality assurance and equality monitoring purposes.

2.4 Exemptions to this policy include:

- anonymous complaints, which will not usually be investigated, but will be recorded;
- the right of the organisation not to investigate unreasonable or vexatious complaints; and
- staff complaints which fall under separate employment policies and procedures.

Staff Grievances - internal complaints of this nature are not covered by this policy. A complaint in relation to a member of staff will firstly be considered under the Complaints Policy and Procedure and if it is to be investigated under the Disciplinary Procedure, the member of staff will be informed.

3. Glossary of Terms

3.1 Concerned individuals: Includes anyone who is directly affected by the actions of the organisation, but excludes anyone who works for the organisation either in a paid or voluntary capacity, such as staff members or volunteers. These groups should use internal management structures and / or the organisation's grievance procedure in the event that they wish to complain about a decision affecting them.

3.2 Staff member: Should be construed broadly, and includes, for the purposes of this policy, staff members and volunteers.

4. Categories of Feedback

4.1 Compliments and Comments

If a service user feels that YWCA Ireland has exceeded the expected standard of service or wishes to leave a compliment or positive comment, they can either:

- Email YWCA Ireland on hello@ywca.ie or any of the specific centres and / or
- Advise a member of staff in person of the positive experience.

4.2 Informal Complaint – local resolution at the point of contact

If there is an occasion where a concerned individual is not satisfied with the service provided; they have a right to complain.

YWCA Ireland encourages concerned individuals to seek to resolve any issues informally with the relevant member of staff eg face-to-face discussion. If the complaint is relating to service in one of our centres, please speak to the Centre Manager (or Duty Manager). The staff member will make every effort to resolve the problem locally at first point of contact. The staff member may seek assistance from senior management at this stage in resolving the problem.

Where a resolution cannot be found or if the complaint is sufficiently serious, the concerned individual may submit a formal complaint in writing.

4.3 Formal Complaint

There are various ways a concerned individual can make a formal complaint:

- email hello@ywca.ie;
- submit a complaint’s form – see Appendix A;
- if a concerned individual wishes to complain verbally, they will be asked to confirm details of their complaint in writing;
- complaints should be submitted to YWCA Ireland no later than three months from the date of the issue arising, in exceptional circumstances, the organisation may exercise discretion with this timescale.

Complaints may be submitted on behalf of someone else, for example a person under the age of 18 or an adult considered to be at risk. Consent of the individual may be required.

If a group of people want to complain, it must nominate a key contact person to lodge the complaint.

All formal complaints will be managed by the General Secretary and forwarded to the relevant Responsible Owner for an open and objective investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, a written response will be issued to the complainant. For the purposes of this Policy, the Responsible Owner is the individual appointed to investigate the complaint.

YWCA Ireland will endeavour to adhere to the timeframes detailed below (Table 1).

Complaint Timeframes - Table 1

Communication	Timeframe
Complaint acknowledgement letter/email	5 working days* from receipt of complaint
Letter/email issued to complainant if further information required to progress complaint	Clarification information to be returned within 10 working days of receipt
Complaint response letter/email to concerned individual	20 working days from date acknowledgement letter/email issued

**Working days are those days on which YWCA Ireland is open. Weekends, statutory days, Bank Holidays and other closures are classed as ‘non-working’ days.*

If, for reasons beyond YWCA Ireland’s control the investigation and outcome exceed, or is likely to exceed the timeframes set out in Table 1, the concerned individual will be notified in writing.

4. Appeals

4.1 If a concerned individual is dissatisfied with YWCA Ireland’s response to their complaint, they have the right to appeal. Appeals should be submitted in writing, with full details of the grounds for appeal, to the General Secretary. Following receipt of an appeal YWCA Ireland will endeavour to adhere to the timeframes detailed below (Table 2).



Appeals Timeframes - Table 2

Communication	Timeframe
Complainant submits appeal to YWCA Ireland	10 working days from date concerned individual receives complaint response
Appeal acknowledgement letter / email to concerned individual	5 working days from receipt of appeal from concerned individual
Appeal response letter / email to concerned individual	20 working days from date acknowledgement letter / email issued

4.3 Appeals will be considered by an individual(s) with no previous connection to the original complaint. The individual(s) appointed to consider the appeal request will depend on the nature of the complaint and appeal lodged.

4.4 If, for reasons beyond YWCA Ireland’s control the investigation and outcome exceed the timeframe or is likely to exceed the timeframe, the concerned individual will be notified in writing.

5. Communications

5.1 Telephone communications

The recording of telephone conversations for the purposes of distribution to and use by any third party, without consent, is not permitted. YWCA Ireland employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace and to protect their privacy, YWCA Ireland does not consent to telephone calls being recorded, unless express consent has been obtained.

5.2 Face-to-Face communications

Complaint meetings are confidential. If a meeting is required to resolve the issue, minutes will be taken and made available upon request to those in attendance. If the complainant identifies any inaccuracies the minute will be reviewed, and where an amendment is agreed a revised minute will be issued. As minutes are kept, recordings of the meeting or conversations in relation to the complaint are not required. YWCA Ireland employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace and to protect their privacy, YWCA Ireland does not consent to recording of complaints meetings, unless express consent has been obtained.

6. Review

6.1 This Policy will be reviewed (and amended if necessary) annually or sooner if required to reflect changes in legislation or circumstances.

Appendix 1 Complaints Form



Date	
Name	
Address	
Post Code	
Email address	
Telephone Number	

Please provide as much detail as possible on your complaint, including a description of the incident/ issue, including when it occurred, what area of work / personnel were involved etc.

What steps have you taken so far to resolve this issue? Include details of any contact you have had with relevant personnel.

Please identify what you would like YWCA Ireland to do to resolve this issue.

Please forward this completed form to hello@ywca.ie.