



oneymca

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Accommodation

Youthwork

Health and Wellbeing

Family Work

Support and Advice

Charity Shops

Training and Education

**Annual
Review
2016**



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Our Mission

YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in body, mind and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive and energising communities that are open to all, where young people can **truly belong, contribute and thrive**.

We deliver a range of programmes and services that tackle the issues facing local people and ensure that there are opportunities for young people throughout our work, from apprenticeships to work experience and childcare to youth work.

We work with all ages, faiths and backgrounds, as part of a global network of 14,000 YMCAs.

We have served the communities in Hertfordshire for 130 years and we reach thousands of people each day.



Welcome to our Annual Review for 2016

The last year has been another significant one for our YMCA, as we have expanded our reach and grown our impact. This Annual Review showcases the fantastic stories of some of the people we have worked with, but also highlights ways that you can help “fill the GAP”, by giving, acting or praying, to support our charity to achieve more.

We have increased the number of homeless people we support each night to 400, having taken on the management of the YMCA hostel in High Wycombe. It has been good to see staff at our other hostels in Watford and Welwyn Garden City continuing to find new ways to support our most vulnerable residents in the face of government funding cuts.

This year also saw our charity expand its Children's Centre work into the Bedford Borough area. Working with three local partner agencies, we will be leading on a contract that will work with many tens of thousands of children and parents over the next five years. Our other Children's Centres in Hertfordshire and Central Bedfordshire continue to go from strength to strength and by intervening early in a child's life,

our staff are able to leave a positive impact that could last a lifetime!

At our Abbots Langley site, which is home to our Day Nursery and one of our three Community Gyms, we have completed work to refurbish the run-down sports pitches. Local people now have brand new facilities at which to exercise and form closer social bonds.

Our Youth Team worked regularly with more young people than ever before and started delivering one-to-one mentoring sessions for the first time too. We also partnered with a number of local churches, who have supported our work through funding, volunteers or prayer.

Given the major projects that we have undertaken this year, we will be seeking a period of consolidation in the coming year to make sure we are delivering all our services in ways that have the greatest social impact. That said, with the pressures facing both the economy and our service users, we know that our YMCA will need to be agile and resilient over the course of the next year, in order to keep helping people belong, contribute and thrive in their communities.

What we do

Accommodation

We have been running 3 Hostels for 400 local homeless people, supporting them into stable accommodation within 2 years.

Family Work

Our nursery and 6 Children's Centres help more than 4,000 families to prepare their children for school and give them a great start to life.

Health & Wellbeing

Our 3 Community Gyms give almost 5,000 local people access to affordable fitness, as well as delivering specialist exercise sessions and sporting activities to thousands of vulnerable people in the community.

Charity Shops

Our 4 Charity Shops sell donated furniture, quality clothes, bric-a-brac and household goods to fund projects that help young people belong, contribute and thrive in their communities.

Support & Advice

The Orbital community centre caters for more than 35 community groups each week, working to support and enrich the lives of more than 40,000 local people.

Training & Education

Our Apprenticeship programme allows young people to gain training and vital skills in one or more of our varied departments.

Youth Work

We work with thousands of young people through evening youth clubs, daytime programmes and targeted work with our young unemployed population across the entire county.



Who we've helped

This year we have:



Helped **1,451** people gain education, employment or training.



Engaged with **55,209** children and young people.



Hosted over **107,800** exciting exercise sessions to encourage active and healthier lifestyles across Hertfordshire.



Gifted **4,410** hours of free nursery care to vulnerable families, worth **£28,000**.



Facilitated almost **19,000** hours of community volunteering.



Provided over **103,178** nights' sleep in our hostels and housing supporting homeless individuals.

Assisted **156** people to move into secure and comfortable accommodation.






Made more than **1,057** youth sessions possible due to sales made in our charity shops.

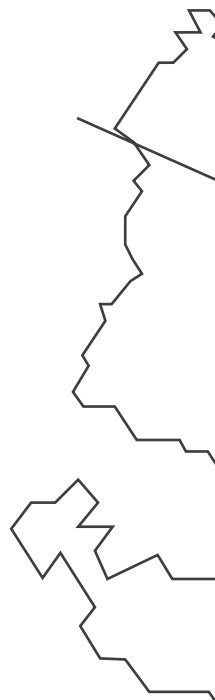
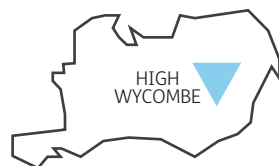


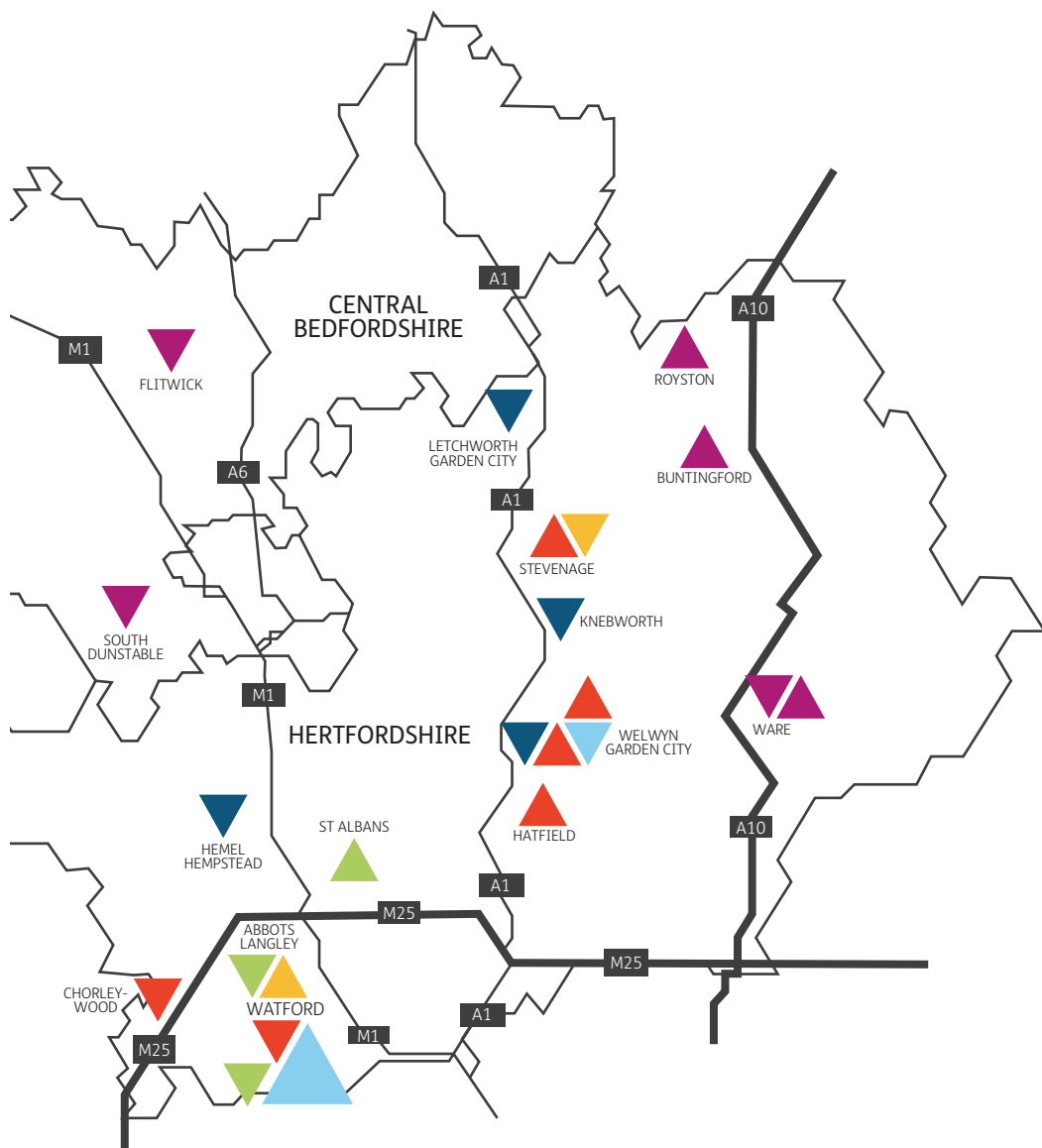
Invested **£8.1 million** to help people in our community belong, contribute and thrive.

Our locations

-  Accommodation
-  Nursery
-  Health & Wellbeing
-  Young People
-  Family work

For up-to-date contact details for our different services and locations, please visit **oneymca.org/contact-us**





Eric's Story

At YMCA, our Housing team offers extra support and guidance to those who need it. We help our residents get back on their feet and find inspiration. Our Complex Needs Officer shares his experience with a resident who had little hope left...

Eric was living with his partner and working as a professional musician; he had been struggling with his mental health for some time. Unfortunately, this relationship broke down and as a result of this he ended up living in the back of his van.

Eric moved into YMCA Welwyn Garden City during the middle of last year. Upon his move in, Eric was allocated a designated support worker who would meet with him on a weekly basis. Within the first week his support worker completed a risk assessment and support plan with him; the support plan identified areas that Eric needed assistance with. Eric was referred to the community mental health team for a comprehensive mental health assessment.

Towards the end of last year, Eric was still struggling with extreme anxiety and depression. He was

referred to our in-house counsellor for structured counselling

Eric continued to meet with his support worker on a weekly basis. During these key work sessions, his housing options were explored and he was assisted in making a housing application to our local council.

Eric's counsellor expressed her concerns to me that Eric was feeling suicidal. Within my new role as Complex Needs Officer, I became more involved and took responsibility for Eric's care pathway.

Eric was referred to our Programme & Participation Support Worker who is a qualified fitness instructor; she organised one-to-one gym sessions with Eric. With some encouragement, he started to make use of other activities YMCA had to offer including mindfulness training, yoga, and the residents' weekly cycle ride.

Within our weekly complex needs meeting, we spent some time looking at Eric's past and helping him to process and make sense of personal issues. Additionally, we looked at his dreams and aspirations and ways of him achieving them. Even at his

“They have all made a massive difference in my life”



lowest point, it was obvious Eric had a passion for music and more specifically, drum playing. We were able to offer him a suitable place to practice his drum playing within our building, and it was not long before Eric slowly started to re-engage with his life as a musician.

We assisted Eric in making a Special Circumstance Medical Application to the local council in respect of permanent accommodation. The local council accepted his application based on his medical background and needs; in effect, this placed him now the top of the council housing waiting list. Several weeks later, Eric was successful in securing long-term council accommodation.

Fill the Gap

Give: £40 would pay for a microwave oven for somebody moving into permanent accommodation with no cooker or white goods.

Act: 3 hours of your time one evening a week to befriend and mentor residents can make all the difference.

Pray: For our residents struggling with mental health or addiction issues that they might find the strength to overcome their problems.

Rhianne's Story – One Year On

Last year we told Rhianne's story. Rhianne is now 18 years old and is still using the youth services that we offer at YMCA. From a bored, unmotivated person at home, Rhianne's YMCA journey has been memorable, helping her to grow into a successful young woman by participating and achieving the following:

- Youth Club and Cooking Club sessions
- First Aid Certificate
- Young People's Leadership Level 1 Certificate
- 1:1 mentoring
- Volunteering
- YMCA residential trip

Alongside these achievements, Rhianne focused on her full time college course and part-time employment. Rhianne felt ambitious and has used her valuable skills for the better. And to think it all started with a YMCA flyer through the door...

A year later

Life has positively moved forward for Rhianne and she is still engaging and finding inspiration at YMCA. Rhianne has not only continued volunteering with the youth team but her confidence, communication skills and youth work experience have progressed even further.

Rhianne has been supporting the young people of Vicarage Youth Club. She listens to them, and is consistent on sticking to the rules, being on time, in uniform and running fun mini games to engage the group.

Hard work pays off, as Rhianne was recently nominated for a Pro-action award and was the runner up of YMCA's Young Volunteer of the year across the nation! This really helped Rhianne realise how valuable she is to us at YMCA.

She will continue to work with us and we will all be actively seeking the next opportunity for Rhianne in order for her to belong, contribute and thrive within her community.

“I believe if I hadn’t have participated on the YMCA residential I wouldn’t have got my job”

Fill the Gap

Give: £40 covers the costs of a mentoring session with one of our youth workers.

Act: Volunteer to assist in a youth club or as a mentor, to give a young person an even brighter future.

Pray: That young people who need support but feel scared or unsure of where to go are guided to YMCA activities.

Micky's story

Micky is only 15 years old but has been using our youth services at YMCA for three years.

“Before attending YMCA youth services, I did nothing but attend school and when I wasn’t at school, I would just stay at home with not a lot to do. My friend who was already engaging with YMCA mentioned it to me and I decided to go along and check it out.”

Micky started to attend the Orbital youth club regularly, where he took an active part in all types of sports, arts & crafts and cooking. These activities encouraged Micky to feel confident and build relationships with his peers.


“When I first started attending the youth club my confidence levels were average but not the best. It took me about three weeks to settle in and make new friends.”

Micky pushed himself and learnt new skills by involving himself in many community projects.

“I like getting involved with YMCA activities as I gain new experiences from them. The best parts of these services are the community projects, sports tournaments, trips and the youth club.”

Micky also helped with the planning and delivery of the thriving community café and even took part in a visit to his local care home, showing his generosity.

“I find the staff to be very supportive. When I have had issues in the past, YMCA staff members have always been willing to listen and help me find a solution. I now feel my confidence levels are where they need to be due to the support I have had from everyone.”



“If I had to describe
YMCA in three words it
would be: Supportive,
fun & helpful!”

Accommodation



Stephen's story

Meet Stephen. Stephen is a father of two children and is currently separated from his ex-partner. Due to his family breakdown, Stephen was taken in by YMCA in November 2014.

Stephen has battled with mental health issues throughout his life and was left disabled after the amputation of his right arm. Despite this, Stephen has always been motivated to find work.

Stephen managed to secure a job at the local supermarket with the support of his YMCA Keyworker and found tremendous joy in his new role. But life isn't always easy and Stephen had to make the difficult decision to leave due to travel expenses, giving him no choice other than to look for alternative employment.

Not giving up hope, Stephen engaged with his Keyworker 2-3 times a week to look for employment opportunities and applied for a number of jobs. Stephen's persistence was rewarded and he was finally offered a part time job at a local hotel.

During his time at YMCA, Stephen has engaged with YMCA support services and found them to be helpful whilst suffering with depression. Stephen makes sure he takes the time to see his Keyworker and discusses his hardships when feeling low. It has always been important to Stephen to try and overcome his difficulties and he has been appreciative of the support shown by YMCA.

Unfortunately, Stephen had housing trouble as he was a joint tenant on his previous property so he was initially unable to join the council housing register. However, Stephen was supported by YMCA through a time of transition and as a result was finally allowed to join the housing register and was eligible to bid within two weeks!

Life is looking brighter for Stephen after he was offered a property through the council in January this year. He has recently moved out of YMCA and settled nicely into his new home.

Youth Work



An Interview with **Destiny**

Destiny is a young lady who recently joined our YMCA Youth Club and takes part in a range of activities that our team has to offer. Destiny wanted to be interviewed to share her personal experience with us and hopefully encourage other young people to gain the confidence to get involved.

How long have you been involved with our Youth Club?

It has been 10 weeks since I joined the youth club.

Could you describe your personal experiences prior to YMCA?

I was nervous and I didn't really have any confidence. I got bullied and it knocked me down. I discovered that I am big enough to stand up for myself and often this would get me in trouble. I had more confidence than I realised but it was mostly just aggression.

What activities have you decided to engage in?

I have joined in with all of the general youth club activities and mentoring. I have attended the 'Girls Night' sessions and even took the Kayaking challenge.

What is something you have particularly liked since becoming involved with YMCA?

How friendly and inviting everyone is. I feel accepted, safe and have found it easy to get along with people. It's like I belong.

Have you felt supported by the Youth Team?

Yes! Because they listen and push you to be the best person you can be without forcing you to become uncomfortable in your surroundings and they are always supportive of me.

How have you developed as a person since joining YMCA?

My self-confidence has grown and since opening up it feels the weight has been lifted off my shoulders. There is always someone to listen to me and it makes me feel valued. Before, I didn't usually talk to people I didn't know because it freaked me out, but now I feel as though I can talk to new people because of all the skills I have learnt at the youth club.

Are you able to summarise the YMCA Youth team?

They are very supportive, non-judgmental, offer help in difficult situations. They feel like family!

Accommodation



Jodie's story

Jodie was very shy and reserved when she moved into YMCA. However, she has never stopped trying to better herself and has been looking for a permanent work placement. This has proved difficult for Jodie and she is now again out of work. But with the support of YMCA staff, she is working hard to resolve this problem. Jodie has an 'I will not give up' attitude and is full of determination.

While Jodie is on the hunt for employment, she has made enormous progress to try and get involved in activities that improve self-esteem and confidence. Despite originally feeling shy, Jodie has stepped out and launched herself to join Dance Pad, hosted at YMCA, and was confident enough to lead a presentation to members of staff and others visitors.

Not only that, but Jodie has signed up for a musical and joined a local drama society! Although Jodie now has a busy schedule, she has proved to be a fantastic resident and a role model to all by becoming very independent and motivated to stand

by what is right. Alongside her social growth, Jodie has also blossomed spiritually: through difficult times she has found comfort in the local church and is now ready for baptism.

"I am in a dance talent show and have signed up for a musical at a drama society!"

Jodie is now on our Personal Development Program and even though she finds this physically hard, she has continued to work to her best ability. Alongside this, Jodie recently completed a challenge, camping out for two nights and completing a 60 mile Taff Trail cycle ride.

"The Taff Trail has now been conquered and I would happily do it again!"

Jodie is a great example of how YMCA can give young people opportunities that they would have never considered or felt the confidence to do so before. We are very happy to be there for Jodie to support her passions and search for future employment.

Adam's story

"My name is Adam. I am 23 years old and I moved into YMCA Welwyn Hostel in June last year.

I have suffered with depression and anxiety since the early age of eight. However, when moving into the hostel for the first 6 months of living here, I was working with Housing Support to focus on battling these issues. My mental health problems are still ongoing but I have constant support from the team at YMCA.

I have worked hard in the last year since moving in. I have been keeping to my licence agreement and have recently moved into Hostel 2 where I cook all my meals and have more space to grow as a person.

Recently, I completed a one year course at Oaklands College studying BTEC Level 2 in Performing Arts. I received a Merit for all my hard work in completing all related coursework and performing in shows hosted by the college.

I have engaged in various programmes, kindly supplied by

YMCA, including Y-Dance, where I would attend a weekly class, learning contemporary dance alongside other residents. At the end of the programme, we plan to put on a show for all the residents - a dance routine called 'Home from Home'. I have also engaged in Yoga sessions every Monday until recently as it conflicts with dance rehearsals.

On top of that, I joined a local dramatic society and will be performing in my first professional role in the production of 'Oklahoma! The Musical' on stage in November. I will be attending college for a second year in September to study a Level 3 in Media Production and hopefully want to move on to University in 2017!"

Adam has evidently come a long way since he moved into our Hostel and we are proud that we can provide a home and a solid support system that can help Adam achieve his dreams.



Julia's story

In April this year and at 65 years old, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. The news came after having a routine mammogram and left me feeling devastated. However, it was important for me to try and remain positive.

After surgery, I was informed that the cancer cells had been successfully removed but I would have to take part in further radiotherapy treatments. The doctors also advised that in order to give myself the lowest possible chance of a recurrence, I would need to make some changes. This included an attempt at trying to make my lifestyle healthier. As a result, I was referred to a specialist Fitness Instructor at the Abbots Langley YMCA Macmillan 'Move More' Programme.

Though the 'Move More' programme had highly motivated me, the Instructor explained that the best possible chance at keeping my spirits up would be to set myself a challenge and I gladly accepted this.

And so we decided to sign up to a 10 kilometre walk in Hyde Park, London! Though this would prove to be challenging and a big goal to set myself, I knew the hard work would pay off in the end. In order to accomplish my challenge, my YMCA Instructor helped me to prepare by writing up a specific programme for the gym. This allowed me to improve on my leg strength and endurance increasing my fitness levels greatly. With the support of my Instructor, Macmillan and YMCA, I was finally ready to face the challenge.

After treating myself to a brand new pair of bright pink trainers and summoning all the determination I had in me, I managed to complete the whole distance of 10 kilometres, raising £500 in the process. It was an amazing day and if I say so myself, not bad for a 65-year-old within three months of surgery!

I have now completed radiotherapy, am walking regularly and I feel good for it! Thank you to everyone at YMCA who helped me along my Macmillan 'Move More' journey.

‘...not bad for a
65-year-old within
three months of
surgery!’



Fill the Gap

Give: £90 can help us to support
4 people living with and beyond
cancer

Act: Volunteer for our Parkinson's
or Multiple Sclerosis groups, or
support our exercise sessions

Pray: That local people who are
suffering can find their way to us
for support

James' story

James is 16 years old and suffers from autism, auditory processing disorder and hyperacusis. James first came into contact with YMCA when his mother saw one of the flyers and made a phone call to our youth department 18 months ago. She explained that James struggles with loud noises, often asks people to repeat themselves and finds it hard to engage with others his own age. When he first joined the youth group, James would often speak of younger children's TV programmes and what he is or isn't allowed to do at home; this tended to separate him from his peers.

However, the rest of the group encouraged James to interact and play. They would tell James their names, include him with group decisions, and ask him questions about his spare time and school. Instantly, James's face would light up. James never forgets what the group tell him, such as names or ages and every time he comes back

to the YMCA youth group, he feels a little bit more affirmed and feels a greater sense of belonging.

Since attending YMCA youth group, James's need to ask people to repeat themselves has reduced dramatically. He no longer talks about children's cartoons and is often spotted on the table tennis table with the friends he has made. James now participates in outdoor sports, group games and even cooking. James engages in workshops such as sexual health and healthy relationships. With support from YMCA staff and volunteers, James is able to understand the workshops and express himself clearly and positively.

This is James' first experience of a mainstream environment for young people and although it hasn't been easy, James is developing into exactly the person he wants to be.



A word from James's Mum

"YMCA staff are incredibly supportive. They encourage inclusion and help with language barriers. This has led to an increase in self-confidence for James. I would like to thank all of the staff of YMCA for their understanding and caring attitude towards James, their help has been invaluable and I am eternally grateful. To sum up, YMCA encourages independence, fun and is A HAPPY PLACE!"

Children's Centres

Our Children's Centres work within local communities across Hertfordshire and Central Bedfordshire. As well as providing parents with the opportunities to attend activities they may not otherwise have access to, the centres offer outreach to those families needing a bit of extra support. Here is a story about how YMCA staff supported a father to safeguard his two daughters.

Two sisters were living with their mother, following the breakup of their parents' relationship. The girls' paternal grandmother collected the sisters every morning to take them to school as their mother stated she suffered from anxiety and was unable to leave the house. Their grandmother would often go into the Children's Centre stating she was very worried about the girls wearing dirty clothes, having had no breakfast and mostly about their emotional state. Often they would leave their house crying, or when they had to return to their mother following the school day, they would say they did not want to go home. On many occasions the grandmother would hear the girls' mum shouting at them or she would be abusive towards her in the street from the front door.

The girls started to disclose to their great grandmother what was happening in the house. These issues were raised with social services by the centre as there were significant

concerns for the girls' safety, especially following reports from other educational professionals that the girls were becoming withdrawn and showing signs of distress. They had stopped playing with their peers, were often seen crying and the elder daughter was not engaging in her lessons.

The case was picked up by social care but they did not feel the concerns were significant enough to remove the children from their mother's care. Through one-to-one work with the eldest daughter, she started to gain trust in the Children's Centre staff and began to disclose the abuse and neglect that she and her little sister were suffering. She stated that they were not being fed adequately, made to sleep in a soiled bed and were being physically and emotionally abused by their mother and her brother.

The girls' father went to court and was granted parental responsibility for a short period of time. During this time both girls stated that they did not want to return to their mothers' care, they would break down in tears, threaten to run away and asked their grandmother to stop driving past the road they used to live in. Despite this, social care and the courts stated that the girls must still have contact with their mother. The Children's Centre continued to oppose this as it was affecting the girls' emotional wellbeing.

Through the continuous one-to-one work that took place at the Children's Centre, staff collected enough information such as drawings, worries that the girls would put in their worry boxes and bring to the centre as well as letters they wrote stating they did not want to return to their mother. The case was taken back to court where the father and grandmother were given parental responsibility and the girls now live with them permanently. During this case the Children's Centre worked very closely with pre-school, school teachers, the police, health visitors and social care. Multi agency working and listening to the child's voice made the difference. The school and Children's Centre believed the girls even though the mother and maternal side of the family stated things were untrue. Evidence was gathered and records kept

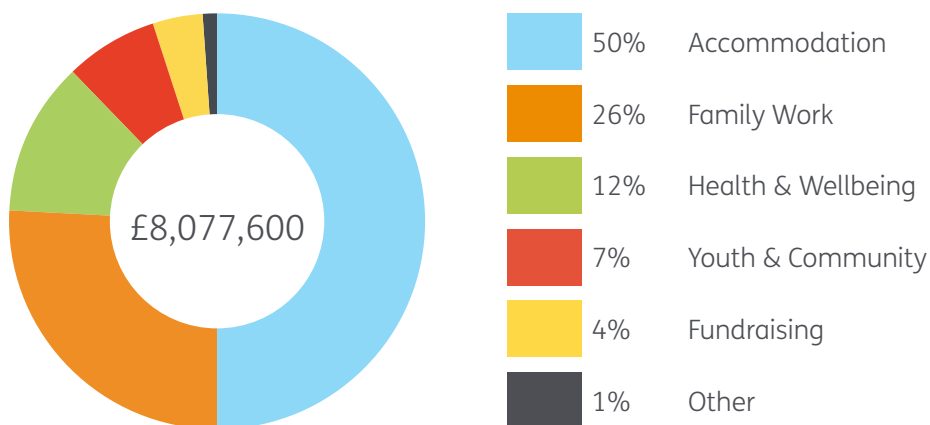


proving there was a consistency in what the girls disclosed. In sharing information we were able to state the case to social care and write reports to the courts that helped to protect the girls from further physical and emotional abuse.

The girls now live happily with their father and grandmother. They visit the centre on a regular basis with their grandmother and the centre now has a special bond with this family. The girls are both thriving academically and both said thank you to the staff for believing them and making them happy.

Where we have invested in the community

YMCA is committed to using its resources in order to maximise our positive impact on the community with the funds available. All our spending is scrutinised by our Trustees at Board level, as well as the Audit and Resource Committees.



A word from the Chaplaincy

We recognise that an important part of a person's wellbeing revolves around their emotional and spiritual health. The Chaplaincy team is here to provide support to staff, volunteers and service users across One YMCA, mainly by offering a confidential listening ear and running events such as Journey to Freedom and Staff Prayers.

One of the highlights of the past year has been running Journey to Freedom Courses in our hostels. The course explores emotions and spirituality over eight weeks and is designed for all involved to grow in this area. We took twelve residents away on retreat to the Othona Community as part of the course. It was wonderful to see them flourish, growing in confidence and self-esteem. Many felt as if they had breathing space, with undistracted time to discover new things about themselves. We had times of prayer, group work and creative activities.

Another highlight has been supporting people who have moved out of our hostels and into their own accommodation. Our

volunteers contact ex-residents by phone and visit people in their new accommodation supporting them with tasks such as decorating, alongside being a listening ear. Our volunteers also support residents in the hostels giving regular one-to-one support, whether spiritual, emotional or practical such as helping people to use the gym.

We continue to be encouraged by the prayerful and practical support offered to us by local Churches. This last year we have seen God enabling us to make new links and to understand more of what unity in Him looks like, which is very exciting! We are always looking for new prayer partners and volunteers so if you feel able to support us, please get in touch.

Fill the Gap

Give: £50 would help one resident access a retreat programme run by the Chaplaincy

Act: Give your time to mentoring and befriending

Pray: That God will provide for all our needs, whether financial or physical. Please also join our prayer mailing list

Contact Us

01923 353600
www.oneymca.org

One YMCA

Charter House
Charter Place
Hertfordshire
WD17 2RT

ONE YMCA

Reg Office: Charter House, Charter Place, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD17 2RT
Reg Charity: 1102301 Reg. Company: 4430743
Reg. Housing Provider: HH418 VAT number: 190 3566 03



YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

Support & advice

Accommodation

Family work

Health & wellbeing

Training & education