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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

One YMCA

Accommodation

Youthwork

Health and Wellbeing

Family Work

Support and Advice

Annual Review 2019



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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 an International Movement rooted in more than 120,000 communities around the world.

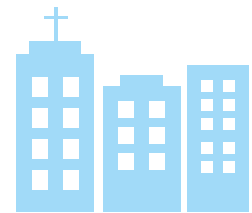
We have served local communities for over 130 years and we reach thousands of people each day.



We Have Helped 95,700 Local People to Belong, Contribute and Thrive in 2018/19



21,333 families communicated and understood



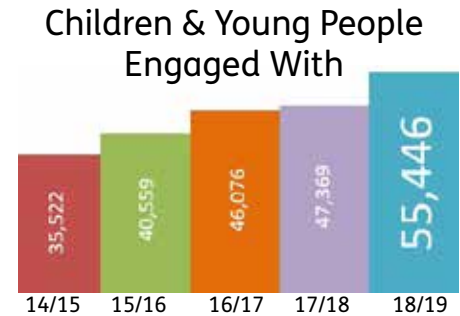
127,200 nights' of safe and secure sleep



2,860 community activities brought people together



105 rough sleepers through SWEP+




13 asylum seekers settled into UK life



4,000 gym members got fitter




139 individuals helped with their complex needs



263 residents moved in to their own homes



54,900 visitors to Orbital Community HUB



23,300 housing support sessions provided independence



2,534 young people joined our youth club activities




600+ 16-18 year olds at risk of homelessness were helped via HomelessHub



170 nursery children learned and developed



£8.8m cost saving to public purse



delivered 3,500 volunteer hours



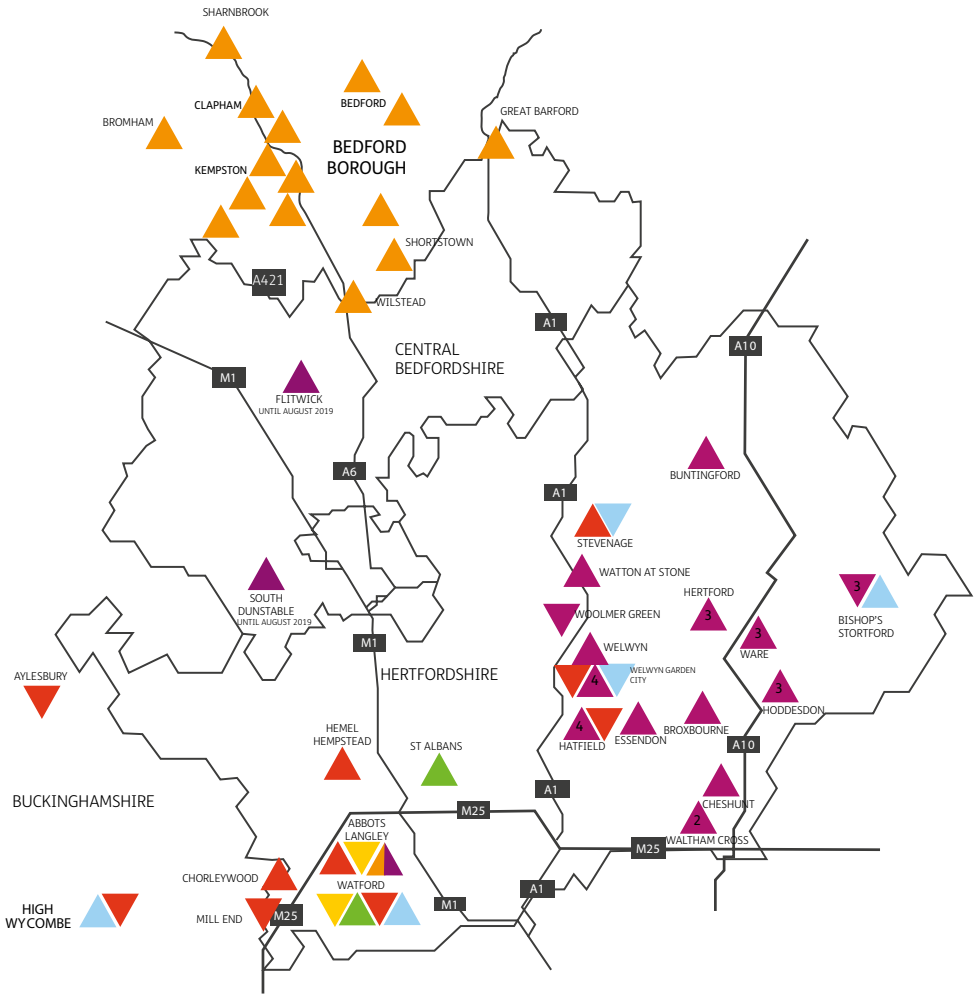
£4.6m added social value

(Data collated April 2018-March 2019)
Icons made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com

Our locations

-  Accommodation
-  Nursery
-  Health & Wellbeing
-  Young People
-  One YMCA Children Centres
-  ECP Children Centres
-  Community Centre

For up-to-date contact details for our different services and locations, please visit [oneymca.org/contact-us](https://www.oneymca.org/contact-us)



HomelessHub

working together to prevent youth homelessness



We are pleased to be working in partnership with Herts Young Homeless (hyh) to deliver the Hertfordshire County Council contract for **HomelessHub**.

This service is the single point of contact to access homelessness prevention services which received 600 referrals last year from 16 & 17 year olds across Hertfordshire.

HomelessHub is a single point of advice, information and guidance for young people at risk of homelessness but can also be accessed by parents or professionals needing support. HomelessHub works in partnership with young people and families to reduce conflict and prevent homelessness.

<http://homelesshub.help>

Our Accommodation

making an impact and tackling homelessness



We provided 127,200 nights of safe, secure and supported accommodation to over 930 vulnerable individuals, across Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

We directly tackled homelessness through the provision of 370 nights of emergency accommodation to those most at risk, including the hosting of 105 severe weather emergency protocol bed spaces.



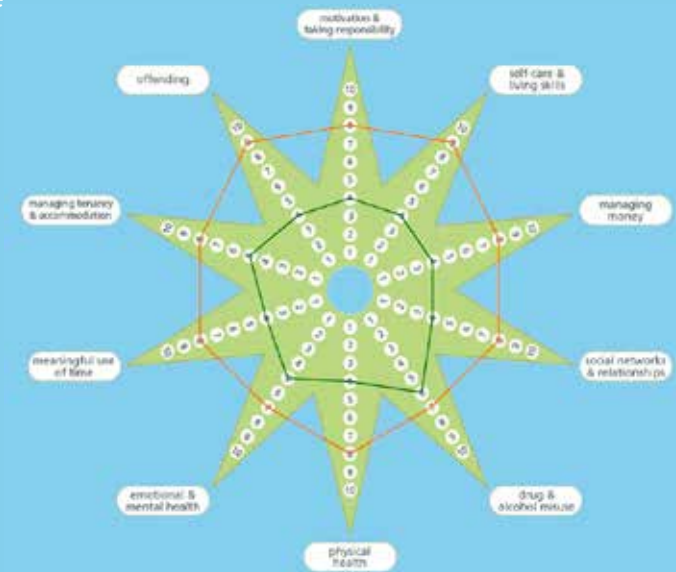
We helped our residents to progress through the delivery of 23,300 personalised and independence focused support sessions, with a further 140 specialist complex needs interventions

We worked hard to make the best use of our resources, maintaining an average occupancy level of 93% across our 439 supported bed spaces, and supporting over 96% of our residents to positively and effectively manage their rent payments.



We placed our residents at the heart of everything we did, using the Homeless Outcome Star as an effective and dynamic

tool to ensure we delivered the right support, at the right time and in the right way. As a result we supported our residents to achieve a 20% point gain their own personal Journey of Change scores.



Altogether that meant we helped 263 previously homeless and vulnerable individuals to attain and develop the skills necessary to move on into their own settled homes, where they really can now belong, contribute and thrive within their community.

Emma's Story

When I moved in to YMCA I needed to get away, I couldn't stay at home anymore. My brother suffers with severe mental health issues and this meant he was always threatening me, literally every single day was the same. I had to escape!

As soon as I moved into the hostel, I was allocated a key worker who would listen to me and let me talk about what I had been through. She helped me to deal with my thoughts and feelings and advised me on how to move forwards with my life. I did try some extra support sessions with a complex needs worker, but I didn't feel ready for them. So I stuck with my key worker and YMCA were great and let me work out what was right for me.

After a couple of months, I felt more confident and I applied to move on to the next part of the hostel where I could keep learning my life-skills so I was ready to move out.

My key worker supported me to keep my job as a hairdresser and helped me get onto the housing register. After about six months I got a nomination with the local council, and moved out into my own place early in the New Year. I've now got my own space, my

job and the life I wanted.

YMCA have really helped me grow as a person and I'm so lucky they were there for me when I needed them!

"YMCA were great and let me work out what was right for me."

Fill the GAP

Give: £40 pays for a New Home Starter pack for residents moving into permanent accommodation.

Act: Some of your time to befriend and mentor residents can make all the difference.

Pray: For YMCA to make stronger links with church volunteers who can help support our residents.

Nina's Story

Nina had faced many challenges in her life before she came to YMCA, including a complete breakdown of her relationship with her mother. These difficult times severely impacted on Nina's mental health, self-esteem and confidence, eventually driving her to attempt suicide through an overdose.

It was at this point our YMCA Complex Needs service engaged with Nina, focusing on helping her to better understand and manage her emotions. They worked together to develop a series of effective early recognition and coping skills.

"The Journey to Freedom retreat helped me to relax and reflect."

Throughout her time with YMCA Nina was also supported by her key worker to help her develop her life skills and abilities that would help her to maintain a tenancy moving forwards. This was not always easy for her, and when she had to give up her job as a result of a tragic family incident, her arrears began to spiral out of control. However, through the commitment and effort of Nina's key worker, and the involvement of other support partners, she slowly made it through these tough times.

Nina then began to get involved with the Chaplaincy team, talking more and addressing those historic challenges that she had faced. She even joined other YMCA residents

on our Journey to Freedom retreat, heading to the coast where she "was able to relax and reflect", leaving her feeling more positive about life and her future.

As her mental health improved and her confidence grew, Nina began to volunteer at a local charity and very soon moved to part time working in another local organisation. She started to take control of her finances, addressed her arrears, and not long after that had the opportunity to move on and into her own flat. Again, our Chaplaincy team and volunteers stepped in and helped her to move in and settle down in her new home.

We still stay in touch with Nina, and whenever we see her, she still smiles and tells us just how grateful she is for all that YMCA has done to help her!



Accommodation

Martin's Story

I wasn't even 18 when my parents kicked me out. They told me my behaviour was unacceptable, they weren't putting up with it anymore, and I ended up in a supported housing scheme for young people. The support just wasn't helping me, I had no family support, college wasn't working and I began to feel depressed.

After that, I had to give up my part time job, because it clashed with the curfew times at the place. I did try and sort everything out by moving in to my girlfriend's flat, but then my mum died and everything just spiralled out of control. My mental health crashed and I started self-harming.

I was at absolute rock bottom, but then I found YMCA and it had

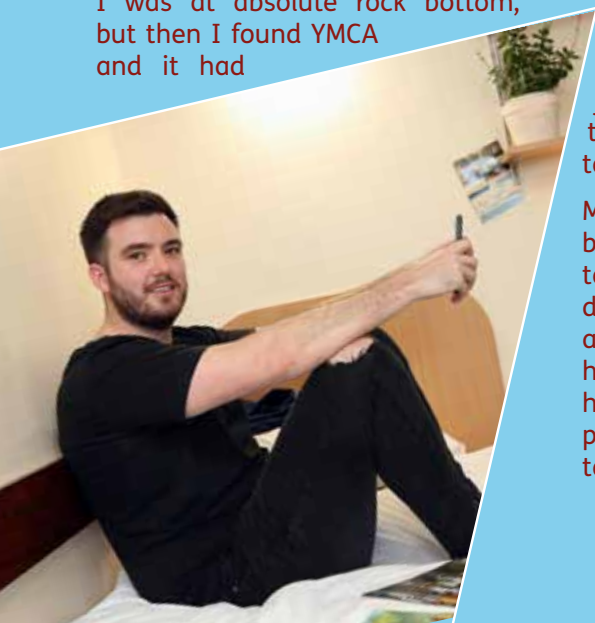
"I was at absolute rock bottom, but then I found YMCA and it had exactly what I needed."

exactly what I needed to help me rebuild my life. I know it wasn't easy for my key worker, I was neglecting myself and my room was a mess, but they kept on trying and they encouraged me to keep going.

A year down the line I moved into the next stage of the YMCA hostel and began to prepare to move out into my own place. It was a challenge, because I had to meet the criteria, but I was determined to make the move and to get my own space with my own bathroom.

The YMCA volunteers were amazing, and they helped me write a CV and to get it uploaded to some websites. I was a bit worried, because I only ever had a part time job before, but they kept telling me I could do it, and I was starting to get my confidence back. After a while, I got offered a job as a cook in a care home and then after a few months I moved on to be a care worker with them.

My housing benefit did go a bit wrong, because I had a job now and I started to build up arrears, but my key worker didn't give up on me. We sorted out a payment plan and the volunteers helped me to stick to it. So now, I have moved out, I've got my own place and I'm really looking forward to the future.



Youthwork

We're constantly hearing stories about how young people are being challenged to act and behave, as well as how they should look and how they dress. These expectations from peers, TV and the media can often develop a range of anxieties that young people struggle to deal with. We've developed our work supporting young people as they navigate these challenges, providing tools and techniques to develop their mental health and build resilience in this ever-changing environment.

One YMCA can offer our Mental Health or Physical Wellbeing programme to support young people in a variety of settings; a school, church, youth club, sports club, uniformed group and many more. Get in touch if this programme could help support the young people you work with.

David's Story

I suffered with low self-esteem but YMCA helped me to gain confidence in going out in the community.

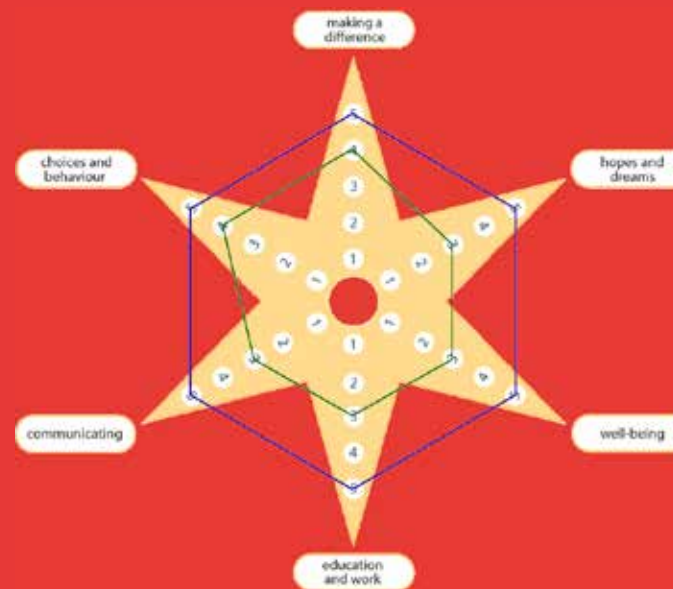
YMCA Youth team have helped me to share my my feelings with them.

This has helped me to interact with people and become a young leader to volunteer at a different youth club in YMCA and to be a role model to the

younger people who attend.

Before I came to YMCA I had low self-esteem, the youth workers helped me to be more confident to overcome this issue in my life.

Since working with the youth team through mentoring and setting goals though a Youth Outcomes Star my life has turned around.



Emily's Story

The contrast between working on the Wheel of Life with Emily, and the discussion that followed, provides a good example of the importance of contextualising what the young person says in mentoring sessions.

In Emily's first mentoring session, she gave herself high life-satisfaction scores for all areas of her life. As she talked about her life however, it became evident that she was under a lot of pressure to be strong, positive and to keep her emotions in order. Emily had a limited support system, and she was often expected to take the role of responsibility in many of her relationships. This discussion signalled to the wellbeing worker to introduce the 'stress bucket', which revealed that Emily usually dealt with stress inwardly, and in a contained manner.

Through discussions with Emily, the wellbeing worker was able to build up a picture of Emily's life, relationships and character, and could therefore more accurately assess how best to support her. It had become clear that Emily struggled to admit when she needed help, even in a mentoring session set up for that very purpose. Therefore, by introducing the stress bucket, Emily and the wellbeing worker were able to identify specific recurring causes of stress for Emily that she could then refer to in future sessions. This became particularly

useful when Emily came into the mentoring sessions and struggled to tell the wellbeing worker what was bothering her.

Emily's mentoring experience demonstrates the importance of seeking to understand as much as possible about the young person and their life before making judgements on the appropriate course of action. It also exemplifies the principle that what the young person says is not necessarily what they mean.

Fill the GAP

Give: £40 covers the cost of a mentoring or wellbeing 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 feel scared or unsure of where to go for help, find the right support they need.

Ron's Story

Completing YMCA's wellbeing programme's 'Wheel of Life' with Ron in his first mentoring session proved an effective method of gauging how Ron felt about his life, and what was important to him. Ron scored his relationship with family and peers the lowest; suggesting that if he improved his social relationships, then he would experience greater life-satisfaction. This provided a useful starting point for work in future sessions.

The importance of listening to the way a young person communicates, and not just what they communicate, was clearly demonstrated in Ron's sessions. The way Ron talked about his social relationships was focused on himself, especially in the way he blamed himself for his unfulfilling social life. This indicated a low underlying level of self-esteem. Rather than initiating an in-depth discussion of these feelings, and straying into the territory of a counsellor, the wellbeing worker framed the conversation with a goal-oriented focus. Instead of exploring Ron's current feelings, the wellbeing worker asked questions like 'How would you like to feel?', 'What could you do to feel like that?' Ron's answer 'I want to feel like I have more friends', demonstrated the

importance of listening to the way young people talk about what they want. This conversation prompted a discussion of the wellbeing programme's 'Circle of Control', and what we do and don't have control over. This helped the young person and wellbeing worker to arrive at a more meaningful and practical goal to work with; 'I want to feel accepted'.

Sometimes the young people we work with need additional support from other agencies and we need to seek the support of partners. A challenge arose when Ron's consistent response to the question: 'What could you do to feel like this' was 'I don't know'. It became clear that Ron needed the conversation to explore his current feelings instead. Our close working relationship with the college where Ron was a student enabled us to work together with their in-house counselling service. We arranged for Ron to receive some further support from them where he continues to get the help that's needed.



Community HUB

Shania's Story

I don't have the words to be able to thank YMCA enough for what it has done for me and my family over these past years. If I think about where I was and what life was like back then I just don't even recognise myself now.

When I first found the YMCA Community HUB in Watford I had been unemployed for over 13 years, suffered horrible cycles of domestic abuse, and had limited skills in IT and English. It felt like my background and racial stereotypes of the time were never going to let me progress to be able support my family.

The team at YMCA were great, they listened, they understood, and they went out of their way to help me. I soon got involved with the English Language classes at the centre, improving my IT and communication skills rapidly. So much so that I gained

a volunteering role and then moved on to achieve paid employment with them. At last my confidence was growing again and I was able to properly support and help my family.

My daughter also enrolled in the classes and I got to see her grow in confidence and skills, just as I had done. She had a renewed focus and interest, and wasn't hanging around on the streets. Her grades started to improve at school, seeing her attain grades up to Level 9 (A**) in her GCSEs. I was, and am, so incredibly proud of her.

Thanks to the YMCA Community HUB and the team, I now work in a local school as an administrator, and my daughter actually works part time at YMCA as a receptionist. She hasn't stopped learning though, and is now saving up for driving lessons!

"YMCA were great, they listened, they understood, and they went out of their way to help me."



Health & Wellbeing

Phil's Story

Phil was working as a maintenance operative when he fell from a roof whilst fixing a skylight. Phil was resuscitated at site by a colleague, which saved his life.

Following his accident Phil has a life-changing brain injury that has affected his short term memory and temper, after Phil came home from hospital his weight and injuries were seriously effecting his quality of life and he set about looking for somewhere to support him to get fit and lose weight.

Phil joined one of our Community Gyms and with support from the gym team he lost over three and half stone giving him better mobility and quality of life. Phil has found the support of YMCA staff instrumental in getting his life back on track.

"The team are my friends and I love coming to the gym to talk to them, it's social for me as well as physically good and the members here are so welcoming - we are a true community. I have achieved so much here through exercise and diet advice from the staff, I used to smoke over 40 a day but I've stopped smoking too. They understand my short term memory problems and are always willing to listen or lend a hand"



Health & Wellbeing

Paula's Story

Paula had always wanted to get involved and get fit, especially as many of her friends were already into fitness and healthy lifestyles. She just didn't seem to be able to find the time though, especially as she had a busy career in the NHS and worked long shifts on different patterns.

In reality, Paula also didn't feel confident enough to walk into (what she perceived to be) a somewhat intimidating and alien fitness world. She'd seen the adverts on TV and there was no way she could walk into any type of gym full of lycra-clad super fit folks who would have made even a super model feel a little inferior.

She didn't give up though and found the YMCA Community Gym in Watford. The team and other users were friendly and helpful, it

offered great value for money, was open when she needed it to be, and best of all it wasn't full of lycra-clad super models.

Paula soon got involved with the different classes on offer, making new friends and getting fitter at the same time. She got advice and guidance from the gym team and very soon became a regular on the gym floor and in the various equipment zones. This was great, she'd found a gym full of like-minded souls, and even better than that a portion of her membership fee was now going directly into helping the local community.

Her confidence grew and after only a couple of months Paula realised that she was "becoming more confident and positive" about herself, she was pushing herself further, enjoying this thing called fitness, and was getting closer to achieving her long-term health goals.

Paula now recommends YMCA Community Gyms to all of her friends and family as being so much more than just a gym!

"A gym full of like-minded souls ... where a portion of her membership was going directly into helping the local community."



Family Work

Our Family Support Services work within local communities across Hertfordshire and Central Bedfordshire. We also run children's centres in Bedford Borough through our subsidiary charity, Early Childhood Partnership. We provide parents with opportunities to attend activities as well as reaching out to those families needing a bit of extra support.

Daniel's Story

Daniel and daughter Saskia arrived at our children's centre looking for support with debt, eviction and mental health issues.

Daniel's mental health resulted in him taking the decision to give up his job, but then his daughter discovered she was pregnant and would soon be leaving work. With rent and other bills not being paid, they received an eviction notice and demands for bills to be paid. Their house became cluttered and unsuitable for a new born baby, resulting in Saskia not being able to take the baby home. Having been a single dad for 20 years, Daniel now felt as though he was failing Saskia and his grandchild.

We made an appointment with father and daughter to come to the centre, bringing all paperwork about claims and benefits that need to be completed, letters in regards to all debts and threats of eviction.

Staff at the children's centre helped Daniel complete benefits forms and for Saskia to receive maternity pay. A plan was put in place to pay off or reduce the debts, making it all much

more manageable, resulting in them no longer at risk of eviction.

Baby Jake was born at the beginning of May 2019, grandfather, mother and baby are living happily in a clutter-free home, where there is now no threat of eviction and debts are being repaid.

Daniel's mental health is improving and he is now being supported around his anxiety on a weekly basis with an advocate when attending meetings.



Karen and Keith's Story

Karen and Keith both have learning difficulties. Keith has three children, from a previous relationship, removed due to neglect and physical harm. Two have since been adopted and one is in long-term foster care. Kayley, their daughter was placed on a Child Protection Plan due to Keith's past.

Keith is in full-time employment and Karen is on maternity leave.

The Family Support team have supported the family by providing, Ante-Natal My Baby's Brain Training, Ante-Natal Infant Feeding and support to apply for benefits. They completed the parent and baby Outcomes Star. Karen attended Infant Massage and they also attended our Introduction to Solids training course.

Karen and Keith now have a good understanding of how to meet Kayley's needs both physically and emotionally. The impact of this is that the parents have put in place a number of activities to support the best outcomes for her.

Following the information given through the perinatal package, Karen is now confident to use car safety seats appropriately and knows how to look out for choking hazards.

They are now in receipt of appropriate benefits, which will impact on the security of their home as they can now afford to pay the rent.

Natasha's Story

Since August 2018 I have been regularly going to Flitwick Children's Centre with my first child Kara.

I have had some difficulties: awful birth, no immediate family support, anxiety issues, no self-confidence and ongoing problems with my daughter's dad which is now going through court.

Being a single parent has been tough but I wouldn't change having Kara for a second.

The support I received from everyone at Flitwick Children's Centre cannot be faulted and I feel that everyone at the centre made a real difference to myself and Kara.

They enabled me to work through my anxieties, giving me confidence to talk to other mums and take part in the activities run through the centre.

Not only have the staff been my lifeline meeting people and learning how to be the best I can be for my daughter but the countless times they have assisted me, donating bags of clothes, food parcels, printing documents for my hearing at court,

furniture, wipes & formula has been endless.

Whether it's talking about any concerns I have or being eager to praise Kara for the new skill she has learned that week I've never felt like I have been a nuisance.

This month I am moving out of the area, for financial reasons. I will keep in contact with the friends I have made through groups and the Children's Centre because I genuinely feel everyone who has helped me care about mine & Kara's happiness.

I can't stress enough what these centres enable parents to accomplish just on a day-to-day basis: they are a genuine lifeline for some families/parents. I hope that organisations like these are around for many years to come.

Many thanks from a first time mum.

"YMCA enabled me to work through my anxieties, giving me confidence to talk to other mums and take part in the activities run through the centre."



Family Work

Sharon's Story

Sharon was referred to the Family Centre for support through the Triage Panel, for domestic abuse and Sharon's mental health issues.

Sharon has two children both with additional needs and speech delays. The family had low income and large amount of debts.

An assessment was completed and we met with other professionals at a 'Team around the family' meeting. As a result of this, Sharon attended a Family Toolkit Parenting course.

Our team also made successful applications for Disability Living Allowance for both the children as well as 30 hours childcare funding at a local early years settings for both the children. We also arranged funding so that the children could have bunk beds.

Sharon has attended sessions

which has had a positive outcome for her mental health. The family are no longer in rent arrears and are accessing all the benefits they are entitled to which has improved their finances. In addition to this Sharon is now able to manage the children's challenging behaviour more appropriately and the children are sleeping better as they have their own beds and a space to sleep.

"I felt supported by the family centre. I came here on my own with the children and have met some lovely people. The family centre helped get me on the right path with both the girls special education needs and that was amazing. I was encouraged to seek help for my own mental health and now feel better than I have in a long time. You do a great job. Thank you for everything."



Annabelle's Story

Annabelle has three children and was experiencing domestic abuse from their father. All the children have witnessed significant amounts of domestic abuse. Annabelle found it difficult to ensure the children arrived at school on time, as well as how to manage boundaries, behaviour and routine.

Our Family Support Team supported her by providing emotional support and protective behaviours work for the two eldest children, to support around what they have witnessed. Annabelle attended domestic abuse support groups and had support with routines, behaviour and the importance of school attendance.

As a result of our interventions, the eldest two children have shown that they are able to recognise and express their emotions especially in relation to what they have witnessed. They now talk openly about what they have experienced, which will support their emotional well-being as they grow up.

Annabelle now understands and recognises the warning signs of domestic abuse for future relationships and states that she is

able to have a healthy relationship.

All three children are now on time to school most days and are attending school every day unless unwell, which has a positive impact on their academic learning, along with establishing friendships.

All three children are aware of the boundaries that are expected of them, and the consequences of not adhering to these, providing a safe and secure environment, which allows them to adhere to boundaries in society.



Training and Education

Supporting Apprentices at Charters Day Nursery

It can sometimes feel like a bit of an uphill struggle for young people to develop their skills and progress their careers.

This is exactly how it felt for Honor and Katy, who were studying hard at foundation degree and apprenticeship levels, and really wanted to work in the Early Years sector in the future.

With interview processes and all of the related checks completed, they both joined our OFSTED Outstanding Nursery, under the close and supportive supervision of our experienced team. This was a great gain for not only Honor and Katy, but also for our young people attending the Nursery as they had an opportunity to interact and

share time with even more carers and supervisors.

Honor told us that YMCA Charters Nursery “helped massively with my studies in Childcare, where everyone is extremely supportive” and Katy said she was “extremely grateful for YMCA supporting me through my Level 2 and now Level 3, which will massively shape my future”.

Alongside their work in the nursery setting, we gave both students time off to complete their academic studies at local colleges. This also helps our existing staff team through the introduction of new ideas and fresh eyes, all of which go towards helping us keep our Nursery at the top of our game.

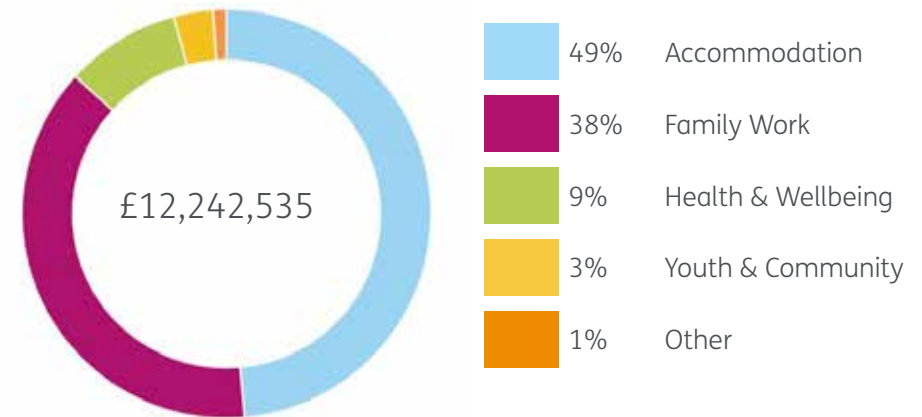
We also use the student involvement process as a great way to identify and recruit new members of staff to our nursery team, ensuring high quality and consistency for the future!



Our Finances

Where we have invested in the community

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



With thanks to our funders, commissioners and partners.



A word from the Chaplaincy Team

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 being a confidential listening ear and running courses to explore life's big questions.

We are blessed with an amazing team of volunteers who give their time and energy to support our service users. They help residents in the hostels by giving regular one-to-one support, whether spiritual, emotional or practical such as; helping people to use the gym, finding work and volunteering opportunities or praying for people in difficult circumstances. They also use their skills to run art and crafts groups and take residents away on retreats, enabling them to explore spirituality.

One of the services the volunteers provide is to support our hostel residents who have moved into independent living. In the last year they conducted 66 home visits and 173 sessions of support both in person and over the phone.

People really value the ongoing connection, especially as moving into a new community can be an anxious time.

Around 500 hours of support from volunteers has been given to our service users who very much appreciate all that our volunteers do, even if it's simply a smile and a coffee as it reminds them they are valuable and valued.

We are always interested to hear from people who would like to give their time so if you feel able to support us, please get in touch via volunteering@oneymca.org

Fill the GAP

Give: £120 helps one resident to attend a Journey to Freedom course and retreat

Act: Give your time to support someone in our Hostels by being a 'listening ear' or supporting a group activity

Pray: That we will see people coming forward to support God's work in all our areas of need