



Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

IMPACT REPORT 2024

YMCA BLACK COUNTRY GROUP



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Our
purpose

Everyone
should have
a fair chance
to discover
who they are
and what
they can
become.



A BESPOKE CURRICULUM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

In 2023, YMCA Black Country Group developed our own bespoke, high quality curriculum, which provides children with opportunities to explore a range of concepts, as well as allowing them to belong, contribute and thrive.

We are continuing to build our curriculum further, by developing our outdoor provision across our nurseries, with our Forest School Leader planning a range of outdoor learning opportunities.

OUTSTANDING EFFORTS FOR EARLY YEARS TEAM

By July 2024, all 9 of our day nurseries had achieved either a GOOD or an OUTSTANDING Ofsted judgement. These achievements are down to a dedicated and hard-working staff team, who show care and compassion in their work every day. These are the values that run through all aspects of our work and to read the report and have it echoed back to us from a third party, gives us enormous pride in our team.

When developing our YMCA curriculum, our mission was to provide activities that are interesting, engaging, ambitious and inclusive. We want our

children to be inquisitive, curious, independent learners with a lifelong love of learning. One of the stand out comments from YMCA Pelsall Lane Nursery's report said "Children arrive eager to start their day and quickly immerse themselves in their chosen play. Staff help children to develop a 'can-do' attitude and enjoy learning new skills." To have our mission evidenced in that report is encouraging and we continue to develop our nursery settings to create positive outcomes and support our children and their families to flourish.

GROWING OUR OWN TALENT THROUGH EARLY YEARS APPRENTICESHIPS

One of the benefits of being part of a National YMCA movement is the chance to combine our strengths with other YMCAs and collaborate to provide the best support we can to our community.

In September 2023, as part of efforts to address recruitment

issues in the early years sector, YMCA Black Country in collaboration with Central YMCA, launched an Apprenticeship Academy at our nursery in Carters Green, West Bromwich, to inspire the next generation of early years educators, investing in local young people to grow our own talent.

With our specific expertise and bespoke YMCA curriculum, combined with Central YMCA's training knowledge, the Academy provides aspiring educators with hands-on apprenticeship training, whilst our own team will share knowledge of our curriculum and how we operate.

So far, we have been able to support 29 young people from around the Black Country, to develop their skills in early years education, with the view to offering employment on completion of their training.

546

children supported through high quality, affordable early years education

29

young people employed as YMCA Early Years Apprentices

77%

of childcare spaces funded through government initiatives



ENABLING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO THRIVE IN DUDLEY

Our Family & Youth Programme in Dudley's Wrens Nest is making a lasting impact. Co-produced with young people and families, Wren's Nest Navigators offers activities tailored to their needs, engaging 175 young people, 105 parents, and 6 volunteers this year.

Now in its fourth year of a five-year initiative funded by the National Lottery, the programme has built strong relationships, establishing YMCA as a trusted

partner. Additional funding from the Violence Reduction Partnership has allowed us to expand, offering daily youth sessions to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Our team's dedication has enriched lives and built a collaborative network with partners, offering seamless referrals and services. By preventing service duplication and guiding residents to local authority resources, we've become a vital link for those who may lack trust in formal systems.

This program showcases the power of community-driven efforts in creating a brighter future for Wren's Nest residents.



Scan the QR code to hear why Molly loves Wren's Nest Navigators

DEVELOPING BODY, MIND & SPIRIT IN SANDWELL

Through the newly funded Wider Determinants of Health (WDH) initiative in Sandwell, YMCA's Health and Wellbeing team is committed to promoting health equality and delivering early intervention and prevention activities to support healthier communities.

The programme offers a range of free activities designed to improve physical, mental and social well-being, including discounted gym memberships, coffee & craft sessions and mental health workshops covering topics such as stress, anxiety, and confidence-building. Additionally, participants can take part in health walks and cooking workshops.

Targeted at adults aged 18 and above, the program has already engaged over 100 individuals in its first eight months, with more than 80% reporting a positive impact on their health and wellbeing

This initiative strengthens YMCA's commitment to empowering individuals in mind, body, and spirit,

and plays a key role in building stronger, healthier communities in Sandwell.

EMPOWERING THE CITY'S YOUNG PEOPLE

Y's Youth in Wolverhampton has become a trusted program, offering weekly activities for young people, with expanded services during school holidays through the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF). This funding enables us to provide full-day sessions, including healthy meals, at no cost to families.

Over the past four years, we've built a strong reputation for culturally responsive programming that resonates with our diverse communities. During holidays, we engage over 70 young people daily, many of whom attend regularly.

Y's Youth offers not only recreational opportunities but also a positive, supportive space that makes a lasting impact on young people and the Wolverhampton community.

Health & Wellbeing

914

members accessing low cost, high quality gym facilities

80

coffees served each day, tackling loneliness through socialising

175

young people and their families discovering their full potential



PERSONALISED SUPPORT FOR A FRESH START IN LIFE

Our housing continues to prove a vital service to our Black Country and Staffordshire communities, providing over 130,000 bed nights during 2023 to vulnerable young people and adults. Although local young people are the main focus of our work, over recent months YMCA has supported refugees from Ukraine, Syria and other war-torn countries.

Through our Open Door project,

a combination of short-term emergency Nightstop and long-term supported lodgings, YMCA has provided a safe home to 39 young people. Despite this, we are seeing a growing need for hosts as the numbers of teenagers who, often through no fault of their own, find themselves without housing is increasing.

A safe place to stay, backed up by the support of YMCA, helps these young people find out who they are and what they can become, developing their full potential, despite a difficult start to their adult life.



Scan the QR code to hear Jordan's story, 20 years on

BUILDING ON THE BASICS TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE

The development of the George Williams Award, named after YMCA's founder, supports our residents with life skills to prepare them for independent life once they are ready to move on from YMCA. Offered to all Supported Housing residents, individuals work through a series of modules around budgeting, social skills and tenancy management. Each resident must complete all modules within the course to be fully prepared to move on into a private tenancy.

Each year, YMCA holds a celebration and award presentation for young people who have completed the course, to invite family and friends to celebrate their hard work whilst enjoying a three-course meal.

One young person said "Moving into a YMCA Project saved my life in

more ways than I can explain.

It gave me the opportunity to move through the George Williams Award, to develop and further the skills that I'll need to move on from YMCA, in addition to supporting me to understand and deal with many issues from my past.

"I have been able to take control of my mental health, my education and my future in a way that would have been impossible, had I not moved into the project. I know that the experiences I've had at YMCA will only allow me to grow and thrive even further."

Many of the young people who have completed the George Williams Award, have either moved on successfully to independent accommodation or are waiting to be nominated through their local authority.

Housing

162

people moved on positively from YMCA housing

575

people accessed YMCA housing services

40

Open Door hosts offered their spare rooms to young people



DEVELOPING PEOPLE TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

YMCA's mentoring service offers tailored, 1-2-1 support for those that have barriers in accessing employment, education and training, to reach their full potential.

By co-producing action plans along with the mentee, YMCA mentors find this provides a more successful career path for young people, focusing on each individual

holistically, to address and overcome whatever barriers they are facing.

Our team take a person-centred approach, working with people at different points in their journey at a pace that suits them and encourages them to thrive.

We are dedicated to helping individuals develop life and job skills, through CV workshops, building interview techniques and boosting confidence amongst our young people.

YOUTH HUB EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS TO TACKLE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The YMCA & Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Youth Hub in Sandwell has successfully completed its first year, surpassing all targets in supporting young people into employment and training. This remarkable achievement has been recognised across the Black Country, with the hub celebrated as an exemplar model.

DWP launched their Sandwell Youth Hub, in partnership with Sandwell Council and YMCA Black Country Group at our West Bromwich site in Carters Green. The Sandwell Youth Hub works with young people aged 18-24, who are referred by the Job Centre to overcome barriers they may be facing that are preventing them from accessing employment, training or education.

Through dedicated efforts, the hub has provided invaluable resources,

guidance, and opportunities, empowering countless young individuals to secure jobs and enhance their skills.

Recently, DWP and YMCA have partnered to develop Umbrella Cafe, which takes place next to the Youth Hub in YMCA's Coffee at the Clock. The Umbrella Cafe works to support people with disabilities to engage them in an informal setting, with peer support and the DWP Disability Employment adviser, to address isolation, loneliness and confidence building.

The collaborative approach and unwavering commitment of the staff have been pivotal in this success, setting a high standard for youth support services in the region.

The future looks promising for the hub and its beneficiaries.

Training & Education

1,304

young people in Sandwell supported to find volunteering or employment

272

young people working with mentors to overcome employment barriers

167

young people started work and sustained employment for over 3 months



SIMPLE ACTS OF KINDNESS MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE IN WALSALL

From our Small Street Centre in Walsall, our team are providing what, to many, could be seen as a simple service through completing forms and advising people how to navigate council websites. However, these services have proved life changing to those accessing it.

Our team ensure that those facing significant barriers in their life are

aware of the support available to them, through the benefits system and accessing local services, in addition to standing up for individuals who may not be able to do so themselves.

These services promote equality, justice and dignity, ensuring that everyone has a voice and the ability to make informed choices about their lives.

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO COMBAT LONELINESS

A friendly service for residents of all ages in Walsall, Making Connections aims to address loneliness, social isolation and to empower residents to take responsibility for their own health and well-being.

Our Social Connector will visit an individual, get to know them and understand their needs and aspirations and encourage them to seek out opportunities to get involved in local events or activities such as cooking classes, social walks or gardening clubs.

PROVIDING THE BASICS TO THE MOST VULNERABLE

The Glebe Centre offers vital support to vulnerable individuals living in the Walsall area, who are struggling with issues such as homelessness, substance misuse and poverty.

The Glebe Centre, which is open 10am - 4pm every weekday provides 2 hot meals, shower facilities, advice on accessing benefits and a safe place to socialise.

Service users often enjoy day trips in and around the Black Country and, aside from the physical benefits, our service users have the opportunity to connect and interact with each other in a different way outside of the centre. This is important in building a sense of belonging and self worth.

Our YMCA Chaplaincy team make weekly visits to offer spiritual support. Whilst most of their time is spent chatting about life experiences, sharing views and opinions, this offers service users a chance to enjoy a coffee and safe socialising with people they can trust and confide in.

**Support
& Advice**

2,374

meals served to
vulnerable adults
in Walsall between
March '23 - Sept '24

139

PIP applications
completed for
individuals with
disability needs

314

individuals attending
the Glebe Centre
for meals, showers
and advice



Christian Mission

OUR LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN MISSION

Christian Mission across YMCA Black Country Group has grown this year with the appointment of a Head of Christian Mission in September 2023 and a Chaplaincy Coordinator in July 2024, increasing the impact and scope of our Christian Mission significantly.

Internationally, we have contributed to the Christian

Mission movement by sending 4 staff members and one trustee to European Unify in Prague in 2024, a YMCA conference which focuses on developing the 'C' in the work of YMCA.

On a National level, YMCA Black Country are part of a leadership team producing bespoke YMCA Chaplaincy Training, which we hope to launch next year for YMCAs in England & Wales, with the aim to equip Volunteer Christian Chaplains who serve in YMCA settings with the tools they need to support our service users in their faith journey.

Locally, we have partnered with St Andrew's Church in West Bromwich

to host Christmas Nativity and Easter Services, which saw many staff and nursery families join in the festivities. For the first time ever, YMCA also hosted a Christmas event in all four Black Country boroughs, to enable more staff and service users to attend. Staff were sent daily email devotionals written by our Head of Christian Mission during advent and weekly devotionals during Lent which we were received with excellent feedback.

We are passionate about developing more partnerships with local churches and to that end, our Head of Christian Mission sits on the Core Team of a large network of churches called Love Black Country. Through this network YMCA has developed new church partnerships to support our housing staff and residents in Dudley, Walsall and Rugeley and we have sponsored the Love Black Country Together 2024 event to promote the work of YMCA Chaplains to over 2,500 Christians from across the area.

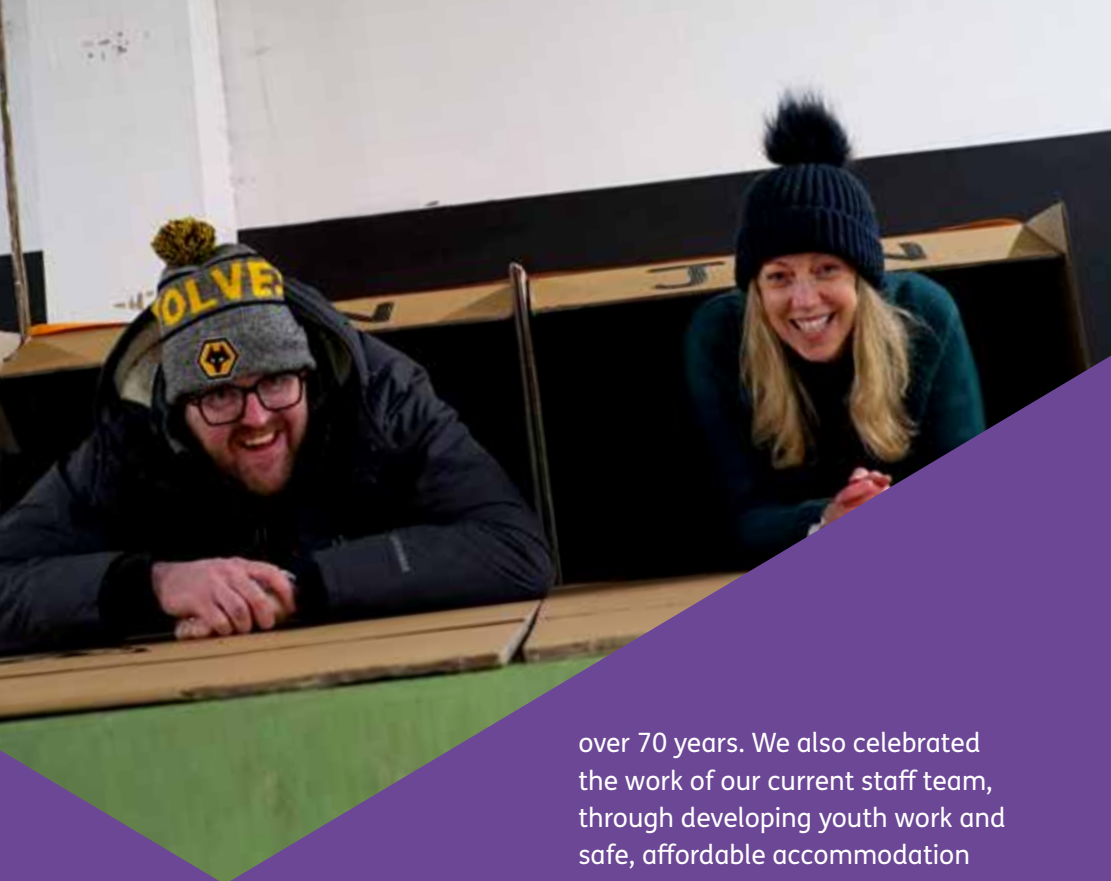
CARING FOR THE SPIRIT OF OUR COMMUNITY

Our Chaplaincy Service has been re-branded using the 'Talk It Out' slogan, to make it easier for staff and service users to understand

what our Chaplains do and engage with them. All paid and volunteer chaplains have their own uniform so that they are easy to identify within our community settings and a dedicated chaplaincy email address allows anyone to book a one-to-one appointment.

To support new residents, Chaplaincy Welcome Packs have been developed, introducing them to the chaplaincy service and explaining how they can access it; regardless of their personal beliefs and background. It provides residents with a safe place to talk and give them hope that they are not alone in their journey.

Our Early Years staff have received training in how to deliver age-appropriate activities that enable our children to explore the Christian faith as part of our 'Spirit' curriculum, such as a bespoke Advent calendar tool which shares the story of Christmas in a fun and engaging way to all pre-school aged children during December. Each nursery is visited regularly by our team, to enjoy Christian puppet shows and stories as part of their Stay and Play sessions throughout the year.



A LASTING LEGACY: YMCA 180 YEARS

In June, YMCA celebrated 180 years since it's founding in a small room in London, way back in 1844. YMCA Black Country's roots began several years later in West Bromwich in 1888 and so to honour our past and all YMCA has achieved in the Black Country, our community open day welcomed individuals from our past, such as Eric & Brenda Moore, who have served YMCA in some capacity for

over 70 years. We also celebrated the work of our current staff team, through developing youth work and safe, affordable accommodation for local young people.

To celebrate our legacy, YMCA has created the 180° Fund, designed to fund much needed youth provision in the Black Country, with the view to ensuring young people can turn around their lives before taking the wrong path.

Focusing on support from local businesses, our aim is to find 180 businesses to donate £180 to support our mission to empower the next generation and their future workforce.

Looking forward, YMCA is currently developing our strategy for the next 5 years and how we can shape services to continue our legacy in transforming communities so that all young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

ONE NIGHT MAKES A LIFETIME OF DIFFERENCE

Sleep Easy has been a regular feature of the YMCA calendar for over 10 years now and every year, a group of at least 50 dedicated individuals choose to spend their Friday night, sleeping in a car park in Dudley to raise awareness and money to support our young people moving on into their own independent living space, raising over £14,000 in 2024.

Through the Moving Forward Fund, YMCA are able to offer a helping hand to young people leaving YMCA, by supporting them financially to buy essential items to make their transition into independence a success; whether that's through sourcing a washing machine, providing a bicycle for commuting or a new suit for their first day at a new job. We are so grateful that Sleep Easy continues to open people's eyes to the struggles young people face in

our community and the difference a small sacrifice of comfort can make to their lives.

BLACK COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CHARITY OF THE YEAR

The Black Country Chamber of Commerce announced YMCA Black Country Group as its charity of the year for 2024/25. The Chamber has held fundraising events throughout 2024 to raise money for our Brighter Futures Fund, which aims to support our youth delivery.

Black Country Chamber of Commerce CEO Sarah Moorhouse said: "YMCA Black Country is an inspirational charity that does important work in our local community to support young people and help change lives. Through our fundraising we hope to raise awareness of the good cause and help extend its services in the community."

Sarah is also joining YMCA for their first National Three Peaks Challenge in May 2025, which aims to raise £20,000 for the Brighter Futures Fund.

Funding & Donations



STRIKING GOLD AS INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Investors in People is an internationally recognised award to assess how an organisation performs against the “We Invest in People” framework. They advise on improving workplace culture through employee engagement, communication and best practices.

YMCA Black Country was delighted to have progressed from Silver in 2020, to the Gold Award in 2023. It illustrates we have

practices that are engaging our workforce, creating positive outcomes and that we are an excellent place to work.

Achieving the Gold Award reflects the dedication each member of staff has for the YMCA. A happy and committed team is vital in ensuring we continue to deliver a positive impact in the communities we serve, helping young people to overcome challenges and live their best possible life.

We are so proud to have such a dedicated and passionate group of individuals living out the YMCA values of trust, compassion, hope and inspire in their day-to-day roles.

YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF OUR WORKFORCE

As the world’s oldest and largest youth charity, YMCA has always put the needs of young people at the forefront of their work. At YMCA Black Country Group, we see great value in having young people as part of our staff team, to help guide our work and develop our services to meet their needs.

As part of YMCA’s National “Get On Board” programme, we recently welcomed Clotilda to our board as a young trustee. Clotilda has a long history with YMCA, as a resident on our Open Door project and now as a Y-Living tenant. Clotilda says, “I wanted to become a Young Trustee to give back and to lend the skills and experience I have gained to a good cause, to help people in need, who may find themselves in a similar situation to mine. I have always wanted to say thank you to YMCA for everything they did for me and being a Trustee is another way I can help other people in need like I was and help make a difference.”



Scan the QR code to listen to Clotilda’s journey with YMCA.

People & Culture

India, our Finance Assistant, joined us as a trainee, having had no previous experience in finance. We hired her on potential, based on her positive attitude and confident nature.

Since joining YMCA, India has taken hold of every opportunity presented to her, from attending National Conference, supporting event planning and most recently has chosen to represent the Black Country in YMCA’s Youth Ambassador scheme - which will open up even more opportunities for growth, travel and confidence building for India.



Scan the QR code to hear more of India’s Story





AFFORDABLE HOUSING YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ASPIRE TO

Through our Y-Living model, YMCA provides young people with new, affordable housing with a trusted landlord. Aimed at young professionals aged from 18 to 35 or young people in full time education or training, Y-Living gives occupiers the opportunity to live in high quality accommodation, alongside like-minded individuals.

March 2024 saw the completion of our Y-Living accommodation in Hamstead, West Bromwich, which now provides an additional 26 safe and secure one-bedroom studio apartments and communal facilities.

Henrietha (pictured right) who is a nurse, moved into Y-Living after relocating from Kent for work. Henrietha said: “I was previously in a house share but it was a bad experience so when I was checking for homes to view, I was pleased to see there was a new build available from YMCA Black Country as I have always wanted to live in one. It is really clean, everyone respects

each other and the YMCA helped me with my application so I was really happy to be among the first to move in.”

We know young people are still struggling to find suitable accommodation across the Black Country and we need to do more. We are excited to be working towards our next Y-Living development, ‘YMCA @ the Dixon Building’ in Wolverhampton.

Joining forces once more with our partners Morro, BPN, Homes England, WMCA and whg, YMCA aims to deliver an additional 30 units of accommodation to meet the housing needs of young people.

This development will not only deliver the safe, secure, supportive and affordable accommodation young people need, but it will also deliver a multi-use space, enabling us to engage the wider community in the services we deliver and meet our emerging strategic objectives to deliver safe, healthy, aspirational, protected and sustainable and engaged communities.

Future Developments





JOINT MESSAGE FROM CHAIR OF TRUSTEES AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

As you read the headlines and fine detail contained in the pages of this Impact Report, it is clear to see that there is so much for which we can be thankful. Without the guidance and generosity of our Lord Jesus, it would have been impossible to fulfil the dreams and aspirations of our Strategic Plan, and therefore to achieve the remarkable impact that is so evident.

Similarly, without a hard-working dedicated team of staff and volunteers, YMCA Black Country would not have flourished as it has in so many communities. We are so grateful for them. Working alone we couldn't achieve our goals either, we are therefore thankful for the cooperation of the wider community in local government and businesses so that we are able to do much more

than could be achieved by any organisation working alone.

But the underlying message is also evident, the more we serve our communities, the more that we discover needs in our service users that require our loving care. And we are listening. We have recognised some key themes emerging from what your young people and communities have said and are developing a new 2025-30 Strategic Plan to shape our work for the rest of the decade.

As we look ahead, we are excited about the opportunities to serve more and more young people, linking our new local strategy with the World YMCA Vision 2030 – with the four strategic pillars

of Just World,
Sustainable
Planet,
Community
Wellbeing and
Meaningful Work.

There is still so much more that we need to do, and so we are praying for the resources to continue to serve young people, and provide them with opportunities to thrive.

For all at YMCA Black Country, we say a heartfelt thank you to the Lord, who continues to inspire us do more, to reach further, and believe that together we can banish any sense of hopelessness, and replacing that with aspirational hope.

**Message
from Chair
& CEO**



Jeremy Oakley
Chair of Trustees



Steve Bavington
Chief Executive Officer

Supporting young people in the Black Country to belong, contribute & thrive.

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Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

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.

FAMILY & YOUTH WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

HOUSING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

SUPPORT & ADVICE