

YMCA BLACK COUNTRY GROUP



Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you



THE SHAPE OF COMMUNITIES

Strategic Guide 2025-2030

Chair & CEO comments

As we look to the future, we are grateful for the past and are filled with excitement and anticipation for the journey ahead. This new Strategic Guide marks a seminal moment for YMCA Black Country as we build on our Christian foundations, strengthening the communities we serve and ensuring young people have the opportunity to belong, contribute, and thrive.

The next five years will be transformational as we deepen our commitment to creating safe, healthy, aspirational, protected, and engaged communities.

Developed in consultation with young people and local communities, our strategy strongly aligns with World YMCA Vision 2030. Its four pillars – Community Wellbeing, Meaningful Work, Sustainable Planet, and Just World aptly reflect the priorities and aspirations of those we serve locally.

This strategy is more than a roadmap; it is a commitment to action and to living out our Christian values. By embracing collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, we will empower individuals, support the most vulnerable, and work towards lasting change.

We invite you to join us on the journey ahead, confident that, together, we will make a lasting impact on the Black Country and beyond.



Phil Walker
Chair of Trustees



Steve Bavington
Chief Executive Officer

*YMCA's vision is
of an inclusive Christian
movement transforming
communities so that
all young people can truly
belong, contribute
and thrive.*

YMCA's Ethos

YMCA is built on a strong Christian foundation. We trust in a God of love, expressed through the life, teaching and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and aim to live this out in our actions and values. We enable people to flourish by experiencing and responding to this love. It inspires and challenges us to trust steadily, hope unswervingly, and show compassion unconditionally.

We believe all people are made in God's image and place equal value on every individual, welcoming people of all faiths and of none. We therefore seek to serve others, look for the best, forgive when wronged, go the extra mile, stand with those who face disadvantage or exclusion, challenge discrimination and social injustice, be transparent, do the right thing, and never give up.

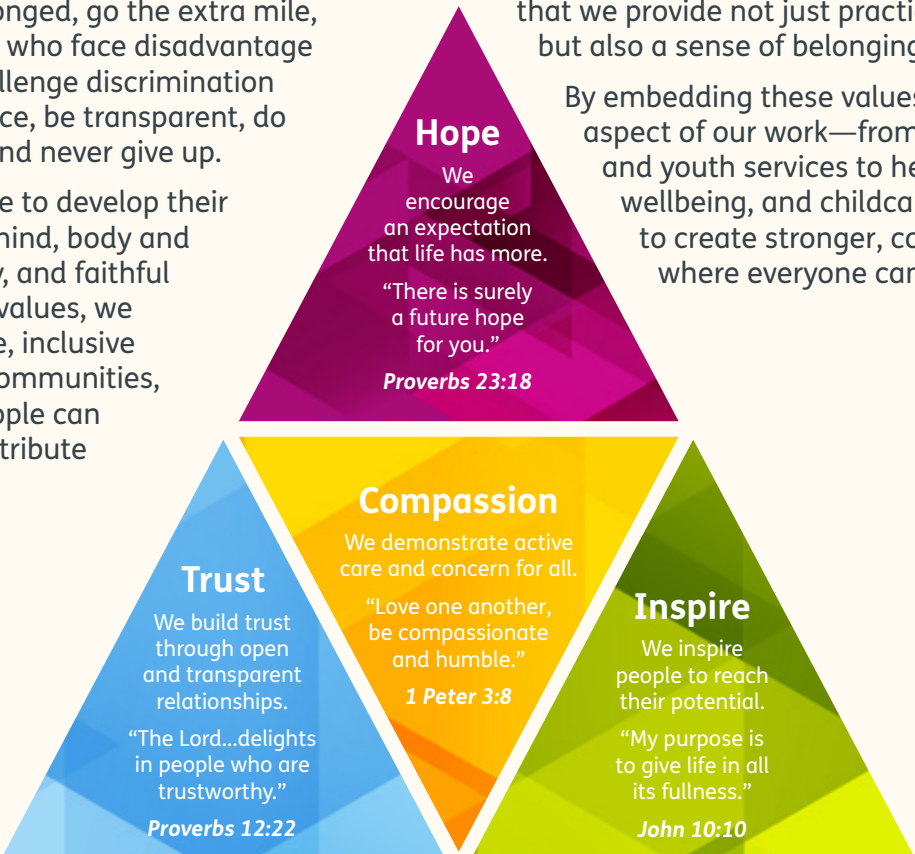
We enable people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

Our Values

The way we act at YMCA is characterised by four strong and distinctive values that flow from our Christian ethos.

Our values; Hope, Inspire, Compassion and Trust, are the foundation of everything we do at YMCA Black Country, shaping how we serve our communities, support individuals, and work together as an organisation. Our Christian values inspire us to be inclusive, compassionate, and committed to empowering those we support, regardless of background or circumstance. They guide our approach to service delivery, ensuring that we provide not just practical support but also a sense of belonging and hope.

By embedding these values in every aspect of our work—from housing and youth services to health, wellbeing, and childcare—we strive to create stronger, communities where everyone can thrive.



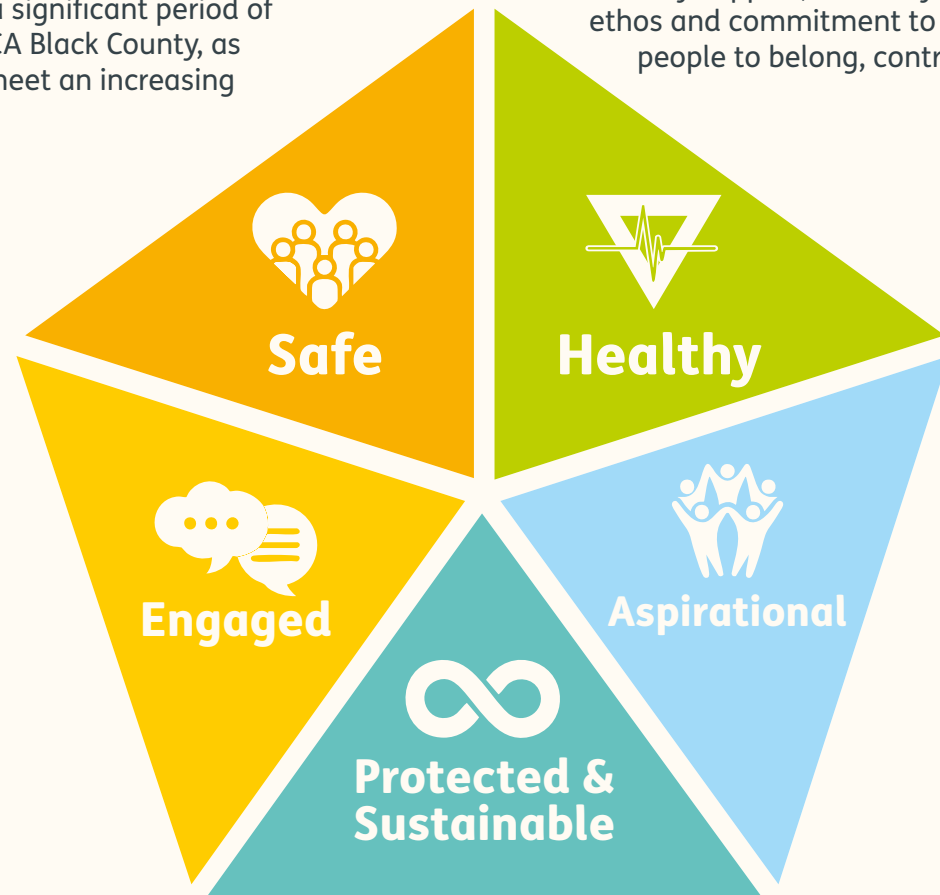
How we will SHAPE communities

The SHAPE of Communities strategic guide has been developed through extensive consultation with our staff, trustees, wider partners and most importantly the young people and communities we work with. It captures the heart of what our stakeholders have said is most important to them, whilst providing a framework for us to continue delivering the services they value the most. It also provides a focus for any new projects we may consider in the future.

Our '2020-2025 Connected Communities Strategy' saw a significant period of growth for YMCA Black County, as we sought to meet an increasing

demand for safe, secure and affordable housing, early years education and youth work. The SHAPE of Communities strategic guide has emerged from this strong platform and a recognition of the changing needs of our service users, including housing insecurity, mental health struggles, and limited opportunities for personal and professional growth.

In a context of reduced funding for youth work and a rapidly changing political landscape, the SHAPE of Communities will drive YMCA Black County to continue to be a cornerstone of community support, driven by its Christian ethos and commitment to enabling young people to belong, contribute and thrive.



The Golden Threads

This strategic guide is underpinned by key themes—our “Golden Threads”—that run through every aspect of our work. When developing the strategy, it became clear that these were crucial considerations to ensure consistency and alignment with our mission across each area. These threads guide not only how we deliver services but also how we engage with and support our teams, ensuring that every action reflects a unified and purposeful approach to achieving our vision for the future.

Our Christian ethos drives us to ensure that every person, regardless of background, is treated with care and respect. Our faith inspires us to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, empowering them to lead full and meaningful lives.

Our staff are at the heart of our success. Their dedication and passion enable us to deliver high-quality services, and we are committed to investing in their growth, wellbeing, and professional development. A supported, empowered workforce is key to fulfilling our mission.

Inclusivity is central to our mission. We strive to create spaces where all individuals feel welcomed, safe, supported, and valued. By making our services accessible to everyone—whether through housing, youth programs, or wellbeing support—we ensure that every person in our community has the opportunity to thrive.

Collaboration is essential to achieving our objectives. By building strong partnerships with local authorities, charities, faith groups, businesses, and other community organisations, we can create sustainable solutions to the challenges facing our communities.

Together, we can make a lasting, positive impact on the lives of those we serve and create Safe, Healthy, Aspirational, Protected and Engaged Communities.





SAFE COMMUNITIES



These objectives aim to capture the essence of the YMCA's commitment to protect communities and individuals, while ensuring that the organisation contributes to social cohesion, education, and support for young people and families.

1) Provide Safe and Supportive Accommodation

- a. Create safe, supported housing for young people and vulnerable adults, promoting a sense of belonging and empowering them to contribute and thrive within their communities.
- b. Develop and maintain Y-Living accommodation for 18–35-year-olds, ensuring access to safe, secure, and affordable housing with a trusted landlord.
- c. Establish and expand family accommodation to ensure that they feel securely housed in a nurturing environment.

2) Create Safe and Fun Opportunities for Youth Engagement

Co-produce with young people accessible, fun and inspiring activities in both YMCA-owned spaces and outreach locations, providing safe spaces for them to belong, contribute and thrive.

3) Deliver High-Quality Early Years Education

Provide quality early childhood education by delivering nurturing, safe, and stimulating environments where children feel secure, valued, and cared for, and where caregivers feel supported and engaged to enable family life to thrive.

4) Tackle Complex Social Problems Through Activities and Strategic Partnerships

Become a positive force for community cohesion and social change through collaboration with partners.



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



These objectives nurture body, mind and spirit and emphasise YMCA's commitment to fostering healthier communities.

1. Build a Healthy Body

Provide access to health programs such as Y-Gym, pop-up physical activities, and healthy eating initiatives, ensuring young people and communities have the tools to lead physically active and healthy lives.

2. Develop a Healthy Mind

Empower individuals to develop resilience, self-worth and help them discover who they are and what they can become.

3. Strengthen Spiritual Health

Deliver opportunities that enable young people and communities of all backgrounds and beliefs to explore the Christian faith and values, through chaplaincy, celebration events, local church partnerships and wider YMCA Christian Mission activities.

4. Promote Team Wellbeing

Create and apply a Health and Wellbeing Strategy to enhance colleagues' physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.



ASPIRATIONAL COMMUNITIES



These objectives align with building aspirations and encouraging individuals to achieve more, both in their personal lives and within the communities YMCA serves.

1) Raise Aspirations and Empower Individuals

Promote aspirational mindsets, encouraging young people and communities to hope for more, by;

- a. Incorporating strengths-based practice in all interactions to inspire young people to belong and contribute, whilst empowering them to thrive and hope for the future.
- b. Providing tailored opportunities for young people and communities to expand their horizons and encourage a broader vision for their future potential.

2) Be an Employer of Choice

Harnessing our values and purpose, we will strive to be an employer of choice by offering attractive benefits and terms & conditions to recruit, retain and invest in talented staff.

3) Develop a Learning Community

Embed a culture of learning, from early years education through to employment that unlocks the God-given gifts, talents and abilities of individuals by;

- a. Innovating and delivering alternative educational options that engage children and young people who may need tailored learning experiences.
- b. Providing work experience, apprenticeships, training placements and international internships for young people within our service delivery models.
- c. Maximising opportunities for staff and volunteer training and development, ensuring they have the skills and support needed to thrive.

4) Work Towards High Standards and Service Excellence

Continuously achieve relevant quality standards, to provide the highest level of service across all areas.



PROTECTED & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES



These objectives focus on ensuring the sustainability of YMCA's services and buildings, promoting environmental responsibility, and creating safe, supportive environments for young people.

1. Care for Our Planet

Co-produce and develop with young people a YMCA Green Plan - outlining specific steps and initiatives to reduce the organisation's environmental impact, working towards carbon net zero.

2. Champion Environmental Change

Empower young people to be champions for the environment and lobby for the environmental causes they care about, contributing towards a sustainable planet and the delivery of YMCA World Vision 2030.

3. Ensure Financially Viable and Sustainable Services

Deliver services that are financially sustainable, diversifying income streams to ensure long-term viability of our work and mission.

4. Maintain and Invest in Buildings

Ensure YMCA properties are well-maintained and energy efficient, with ongoing investment in infrastructure to create trauma responsive, functional, environmentally conscious and welcoming spaces for service users and staff.

ENGAGED COMMUNITIES



These objectives emphasise stakeholder engagement, community visibility, and empowering young people, while promoting communication and collaboration both locally and internationally.

1. Embed Co-Production and Consultation

Develop a YMCA Youth Consultation Board, empowering young people to use their voice to inform youth strategy and service improvement.

2. Enhance Internal Communication and Connectivity

Develop robust cross-departmental communication that facilitates up-to-date information sharing and activities that foster a sense of connection, joy and engagement among colleagues.

3. Promote and Celebrate the YMCA

Improve the visibility of the YMCA in the Black Country region, celebrating our people and ensuring that young people and communities understand the services offered and how to access them.

4. Enable Young People to contribute to their communities by:

- a. Offering governance opportunities that amplify the voices of young people, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making in the YMCA locally, nationally and internationally.
- b. Providing opportunities to participate in activities which are focused on having a positive impact on their communities.



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

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FAMILY & YOUTH WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

HOUSING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

SUPPORT & ADVICE