

# ETHOS STATEMENT

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## 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

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 serve compassionately.

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 energizing communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

## 2. CONTEXT

YMCA BCG<sup>1</sup> is an independent, non-denominational Christian charity affiliated to the English YMCA Federation which in turn affiliates to the International YMCA Movement. The importance of Christianity to the worldwide Movement is explained within three global statements:

The **Paris Basis**, the founding 'first principle' of the worldwide YMCA Movement, established in 1855, remains the cornerstone of all governing statements through to the present day. In simple terms it states that YMCAs will unite Christians from all traditions to work together to 'extend God's Kingdom'.

The **Kampala Principles**, developed in 1973, sought to build on the founding principle to address the present realities at that time. It reaffirmed Christ at the centre of the Movement and further developed commitments around issues of equality, social justice, environmental responsibility and personal development.

**Challenge 21** is the latest globally approved statement, produced in 1998. It again reaffirms the Paris Basis, the gospel message of Jesus, the themes of the Kampala Principles, and makes specific reference to the empowerment of young people, and the promotion of racial and religious harmony.

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<sup>1</sup> Also applies to the Charity's subsidiaries and associated companies.

Collectively, these three global statements have contributed to the formation of a national **Vision Statement**, a national **Aims & Purposes Statement**, and model governing documents for YMCAs in England. It is this governing document, known as the Articles of Association, which contains the charitable objects and provides the legal framework for the operation of this Association.

These **Charitable Objects** emphasise that the YMCA is Christ-centred, uniting Christians of different traditions, who motivated by their faith, work together to 'extend the kingdom of God. They also highlight that the principle ways of achieving this objective is in the areas of education, Christian faith, social housing, relief for people in need, and recreation & leisure (where it assists social welfare). The desire to welcome, serve and work with people of all faiths and none, is also explicitly stated.

The detail of the specific activity which individual YMCAs engage in to fulfil these objectives is left to the discretion of that Association.

### 3. OUR CHRISTIAN ETHOS

Ethos as described here is 'what we believe in and the values we live by; the motivations that drive and underpin our corporate life'.

This Ethos Statement is designed to ensure that we remain faithful to our Christian foundation expressed in the worldwide statements and charitable objectives outlined above; manifested in consistent behaviours that are corporately agreed and remain accountable within the line management structures of the Association.

Accordingly the Board of YMCA Black Country Group affirms its commitment to the following principles.

YMCA Black Country Group:

1. is an **non-denominational Christian charity** who's primary purpose is to demonstrate the love of Jesus in practical ways. We are not a church, and therefore not principally involved in sacramental activity nor are we defined by specific denominational doctrine.
2. recognises the special emphasis that the Bible gives to **helping the poor, the dispossessed, the homeless and vulnerable**. We see the work of the Association as a practical outworking of the Christian faith, and part of a long tradition of Christian social action and concern for the marginalised.
3. believes that the Christian faith brings **distinctive added value** to the delivery of public services, to individuals and communities.

4. believes that the Christian faith should **influence both what we do and the way we do it**. In seeking to follow the life, example and teaching of Jesus Christ, this should positively impact our actions. These actions may differ from those of organisations that do not share our faith basis.
5. seeks to inspire people to develop their potential in 'mind body and spirit' from a Christian perspective and **using a Christian frame of reference**. We recognise that the spiritual journey of others may take place outside of this, and we will work with other agencies and faith groups where an individual's needs are identified to be outside the scope of our charitable objectives.
6. **works in collaboration** with organisations and individuals who have different motivations, in order to achieve common social objectives, so long as the Association's ethos is not compromised.
7. strives to ensure that its housing, childcare and community services **are accessible for all**, irrespective of religious faith. We will encourage respect and understanding for the differing cultural and religious views of others.
8. believes that in order to authentically reflect a Christian narrative, there must be people at the heart of the Association who regard 'Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scriptures, and desire to be his disciples', and to whom is entrusted the responsibility to nurture and uphold the Christian purpose of the Association. Staff posts with faith-based occupational requirements are subject to the Association's '**Central Post**' Policy. The faith-based occupational requirement is reviewed on a case-by-case basis in order to prevent unlawful discrimination.
9. welcomes people of **all faiths and none** into the staff team who respect this ethos and uphold the Associations values. Devotion, prayer and acts of worship take place from time to time in YMCA gatherings. While respecting such activity, staff from other faiths and none may choose to not actively participate.
10. holds that **the Paris Basis** defines clearly what the Movement's understanding of a Christian is, and that other differences on Christian doctrinal matters, however important in themselves, shall not interfere with harmony and unity within the Association.
11. provides appropriate opportunities for people to develop their **understanding of the Christian faith** and its ability to transform personal and organisational motivations.

## **4. OUR CHRISTIAN VALUES**

The Association's values of Compassion, Hope, Trust and Inspire, are exemplified in the life and teaching of Jesus, and provide an aspirational set of behaviours for how the Association works with others. We believe that these values can be embraced and upheld by people of all faiths and none.

### ***Compassion***

We demonstrate active care and concern for all.

*"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people" – Galatians 6: 10*

### ***Hope***

We encourage an expectation that life has more.

*"Encourage one another to build each other up" -1 Thessalonians 5:11*

### ***Trust***

We build Trust through open, honest and transparent relationships. *"Because of my integrity you uphold me" – Psalm 41:12*

### ***Inspire***

We inspire people to reach their potential.

*"Life, yes, and have it full to overflowing" – John 10:10.*

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YMCA Black Country Group is committed to reflecting and authenticating its Christian Ethos and Values to its policies, practices and behaviours, with transparency and integrity.

## **Summary changes to this policy (July 2020)**

1. Summary Statement – Simplified and replaces the previous Scope - Section 1.
2. Section 3 – reduced bold type for easier reading.
  - a. Replaced 'ecumenical' with 'non-denominational'
  - b. Replaced 'Christian framework' with 'Christian frame of reference'
  - c. Simplified principle 3.
3. Our Christian Values - Section 4 – New values straplines inserted