



YMCAs in Wales Manifesto 2016

Accommodation

Training and Education

Health and Wellbeing

Family Work

Democracy and
Engagement

We believe

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Foreword

YMCAs in Wales have been serving the communities in which they work for over 160 years. From humble beginnings in 1852 located in a small office in St Mary's Street, Cardiff – YMCAs in Wales now form part of a global movement, helping more than 58 million people in 119 countries across the globe.

This manifesto represents a new chapter for YMCAs in Wales as we continue to strengthen the bonds between us, enabling us to best support the communities in which we operate.

Whilst Wales may be a very different place from what it was at our inception, the needs of the individuals we support are no less. Our community based approach allows us to adapt to these changing needs and continue to work with individuals to reach their full potential.

At no time before have the communities we serve felt so unheard by government. In order to overcome this, the YMCA Manifesto has been created by reaching out to the individuals in those communities and listening to their needs. It is by asking these difficult questions that we can get to the heart of the changes the next Welsh Assembly must make.



Andrew Jenkins
Chair
YMCAs in Wales

We have learnt from those that we have supported through training and education on what can make their transitions into work easier; we have held focus groups with young carers who access our support groups to understand what positive change looks like to them. And to those young and old for whom YMCAs in Wales provide a roof – we asked what solutions are needed to get their lives back on track.

YMCAs in Wales recognise that when public services fail it will often be our staff and volunteers who are there to reach out a hand. We will continue to offer this hand to all those who need us – including our representatives in the Welsh Assembly – because we know that Wales is stronger when we support one another.



Anne-Marie Rogan
Deputy Chair
YMCAs in Wales

Introduction

YMCAs in Wales are a federation of 19 YMCAs that operate across the nation. Each one is a thriving and active community that seeks to bring change to some of the most vulnerable people in the country, giving them the practical support they need to achieve their full potential.

Each YMCA is unique; continuously adapting to the communities in which it works. However, all are bound by the belief that everyone, regardless of their background, gender, or faith, should have the opportunity to belong, contribute and thrive.

YMCAs in Wales help individuals with education and training opportunities, access to arts facilities, counselling services, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) advice and support for young carer groups. They operate across both rural and urban settings through youth clubs, community centres, homeless hostels, gyms, sports clubs, social enterprises and shops.

While our central role is focussed within Wales, work is done to extend the reach of our work through Y Care International; our international development partner. Together we provide opportunities for young people in Wales to participate in international activities that impact the lives of vulnerable young people overseas.

The ever growing need for our support across communities is set within a context of reduced funding available both nationally and locally. YMCAs in Wales recognise the Welsh Assembly is having to make challenging decisions in order to find a balance.

It is for this reason that the YMCA Manifesto is built around the main work areas of YMCAs; accommodation, training and education, health and wellbeing, family work, and democracy and engagement.

Contained within it are messages of change to government - while they are not always ones that are easily achievable, they are necessary to help foster a Wales which truly supports the most vulnerable people in our communities.

YMCA hopes that our elected representatives in the next Welsh Assembly will share our vision for transforming lives and communities, enabling all individuals to develop in mind, body and spirit.



Sam, 17

Accommodation

We believe that every young person should have a safe place to stay.

Not being able to access quality housing can have a huge impact on the life of an individual, increasing the risk of them suffering from poor health, educational under-attainment, unemployment and poverty. However, this is the reality being faced by growing numbers of people in Wales.

The challenge being faced by young people is demonstrated by the increase in the numbers having to remain at home. In Wales, 27% of 20 to 34-year-olds now live with their parents, an increase of 6% in the past 10 years.¹

For those unable to remain at home, the consequences can be devastating. More than 14,100 people were accepted by Local Authorities as being homeless last year.²

However, these statutory figures only provide a partial picture of the true levels of homelessness, with many thousands more sleeping rough or sofa surfing every night.

At the heart of the problem currently confronting communities in Wales is the lack of low-cost housing available, which is pushing up the costs of renting and buying.

In the past five years, less than 800 new one-bedroom properties have been built in Wales, meaning much more urgently needs to be done to create additional low-cost housing specifically targeted at young and single people in housing need.³

Responding to this issue, YMCA developed Y:Cube, which, through its unique off-site construction and design system provides high quality, one-bedroom accommodation. These can be built quicker, and for, typically, 25% less than the average building costs and it is low-cost housing models such as these that the Welsh Government needs to invest in.

In contrast, in many other areas of Wales a focus needs to be placed on bringing existing houses and buildings back into use.

While 'Houses to Homes' scheme has made a positive start by bringing more than 7,500 properties back into use, we hope the Welsh Government will further incentivise schemes that turn the 23,000 currently empty houses and buildings in Wales into homes.

For those looking to buy now, it is vital that schemes such as *'Help to Buy Cymru'* are taken forward over the next five years so young people and first-time buyers can continue to receive help paying for a deposit.

However, as well as helping those looking to buy, it is important that help is given to those for whom even renting a home seems impossible.

The waiting lists remain too long for those looking to access social housing and the needs of young and single people are too often overlooked. With individuals reporting a wait of anywhere up to five years for a home, YMCA believes the Welsh Government needs to progress a review of the current way social housing is allocated.

Rising letting fees and deposits now worth an equivalent of six weeks rent, on top of a month's rent required in advance, mean that prospective tenants moving into the private rented sector can be faced with up-front costs in excess of £1,100 before they are able to move into even a one-bedroom property.⁵

These upfront costs were raised as one of the largest concerns by those participating in the development of this manifesto. To overcome this barrier and build on initiatives already running, YMCA is calling for the introduction of a national *'Help to Rent'* scheme, which gives individuals a deposit that they can then pay back over a 12-month period.

Finally, it is important that the Welsh Government continues to support individuals in most housing need – those who find themselves homeless.

Often these individuals will come from some of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in society, including care leavers and former offenders, and it is important they are able to access adequate support.

Speaking to people who are homeless highlights the vital role that *'Supporting People'* funding plays in helping them to secure a safe and supportive place to live; however, in the past three years, funding for this programme has been cut by more than £12 million.⁶

**We provide safe,
supported
accommodation for almost
1,000 people in Wales
every year**

YMCA believes it is critical that *'Supporting People'* funding is maintained and protected over the next five years so that providers of homelessness services can meet the increasing demand and needs of the individuals they support.

Alongside protecting *'Supporting People'* funding, it is important that investment in suitable supported accommodation continues. With hundreds of individuals and families still being placed in inappropriate housing such as bed and breakfast accommodation, action still needs to be taken to ensure those who find themselves homeless have a suitable place to stay.⁷

However, this need to assist individuals into independent living does not, and should not, stop the moment they move out of supported accommodation, and the individuals we work with often highlight their need for continued support.

This is why YMCA is calling on the Welsh Government, local authorities and charities to work together to establish support schemes in every area of Wales for those leaving supported accommodation and looking to enter the private rented sector.

Recommendations

- ▶ Promote further investment in building low-cost, one-bedroom homes specifically targeted at single people.
- ▶ Invest in the development of alternative models of housing such as Y:Cube.
- ▶ Further incentivise schemes that utilise disused housing and business spaces to develop them into suitable low-cost homes to rent and buy – in particular schemes that upskill young people as part of the redevelopment.
- ▶ Maintain the *'Help to Buy Cymru'* scheme.
- ▶ Commission a national review of the system for allocating social housing.
- ▶ Introduce a national *'Help to Rent'* scheme.
- ▶ Protect funding for the *'Supporting People'* programme in Wales.
- ▶ Incentivise the development of a wide range of supported housing and floating support available for people who find themselves homeless.
- ▶ Establish a private rented sector scheme in each local authority area, which supports individuals in need with advice and guidance such as tenancy training, funding for furniture, a guarantor and floating support.

A middle-aged man with short brown hair and a serious expression is holding a large black speech bubble sign. The sign contains white handwritten text. He is wearing a grey and blue baseball-style t-shirt. The background shows a blurred building with windows. A light blue geometric shape is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Provide
more support for
people leaving
supported
accommodation

Private Rented Sector and Bond Scheme YMCA Cardiff Housing Association

Recognising the limited move on options for service users, YMCA Cardiff Housing Association developed a Private Rented Sector and Bond Scheme in 2011, as a route to private tenancies for residents who were identified as being ready to leave our accommodation.

The scheme is designed to overcome the various obstacles residents face when trying to move out of supported housing, including a lack of social housing and the high agency fees, expensive bonds and advanced rents that the private rented sector demands.

The scheme engages with landlords and property management agents to seek high quality accommodation in the private rented sector; to effectively match tenants to vacancies; to help improve standards of management for private rented accommodation; to provide helpful advice and support to landlords; to act as a link for landlords to minimise disputes and manage a cost effective bond and rent in advance

To further help individuals make the transition more successfully, YMCA Cardiff Housing Association also runs a tenancy ready programme for service users on the waiting list to move out, to ensure they are provided with the skills needed to maintain the tenancy. They also provide continued support to both the landlord and the tenant to help manage any potential disputes that may have occurred.

In addition, YMCA Cardiff Housing Association have been successful in persuading landlords to set their rents at affordable levels for people leaving supported housing.

The scheme has helped house over 136 people so far, giving them the opportunity to live independent lives and allowing others to access the vital support that YMCA Cardiff Housing Association provides in its accommodation scheme.

Training and Education

We believe that every person should be able to fulfil their full potential.

Leaving education without relevant qualifications and skills can severely damage an individual's employment prospects, long-term earnings, and future health and wellbeing.

While there have been improvements made in young people's academic achievements during the past five years,⁵ action still needs to be taken to ensure that no young person is left behind. Accordingly, additional funding should be made available to schools to target marginalised groups, such as those who are excluded from school and those leaving without qualifications, to raise their attainment levels and give them an equal chance of success.⁹

However, the continued push for academic improvement should not be at the expense of the broader wellbeing of young people.

Young people taking part our focus groups made it clear that they were increasingly feeling severe pressure to do well in exams. This is something that is reinforced by ChildLine in Wales delivering nearly 1,170 counselling sessions on exam pressures last year, an increase of 200% on the previous year.¹⁰

In addition, significant numbers of young people revealed that they are experiencing bullying; whether that is in schools or online via cyber bullying¹¹ and pressure to partake in 'sexting'.¹²

To support young people's journey through education, YMCA is calling on the Welsh Government to, firstly, prioritise support within schools for those suffering from exam stress and, secondly, provide training and support for teachers to better identify and tackle bullying as well as support those affected.

In the drive to improve academic attainment, it is also important that the other, broader skills young people need to succeed are not forgotten. Young people frequently told us they felt ill-prepared for the transition into independence and employment, stating that they did not feel they had the necessary skills.

YMCA proposes that the Welsh Government takes a more radical approach to providing young people with these informal life skills by introducing a separate 'Skills for Life' curriculum, which incorporates areas such as resilience, healthy relationships, money management, substance misuse and body confidence.

However, rather than the responsibility falling on schools, this should be a partnership curriculum delivered by a range of local organisations who are sufficiently funded and empowered to support young people both in and beyond the school setting.

To supplement this, the Welsh Government should invest in the quality of work experience available ensure all young people in Wales have access to at least three weeks work experience before the age of 17, including those individuals not in mainstream education.

At the heart of YMCA's beliefs is that people should always have the opportunity to better themselves and continue to learn once they leave school, especially those whose education was disrupted the first time around. However, many of the people with whom YMCA works felt that they are currently unable to do this, demonstrated by the number of participants in further education haven fallen by nearly 45,000 over the past five years.¹³

YMCA believes the Welsh Government should look to become a leader in the provision of accredited open and online further education courses to increase the numbers participating in training and education.

This should be supplemented with investment to ensure all homes and businesses have access to superfast broadband and that there is a network of free-to-use public access computers in the most deprived and rural communities.

The last Welsh Government's focus on increasing alternative Further Education and training options, which led to increasing numbers of apprentices,¹⁴ is welcomed. We hope the Welsh Government builds on this success and continues to financially incentivise employers to take on apprentices, in particular young people and those with low academic attainment, through schemes such as *'Young Recruits'*.

Another significant barrier raised by people looking to access Further Education and training, particularly by those choosing a non-academic route, was the ability to find funding. Consequently, YMCA believes that the Welsh Government should remove some of the financial barriers currently in place and create parity between the financial support available for people taking a university route and for those choosing a non-academic path.

**We help 10,000 people
in Wales engage in
training and education
every year**

This can be done in a number of ways; firstly, by extending the cut-off age for funding support in Further Education from 19 to 21-years-old and, secondly, by creating a student loan style system for those taking non-academic courses and certificates.

In addition, we are calling on the Welsh Government to expand the *'My travel pass'* scheme to offer discounted public transport to all young people up to the age of 21 undertaking an apprenticeship, further training or an education course.

Finally, it is important that the Welsh Government continues to help those who need training, education and support the most; the 94,000 people in Wales are still out of work and struggling to find employment.¹⁵

Young people told us that Jobcentre Plus is merely dehumanising many of those who access its services, damaging their confidence and in some cases even setting back their journey into employment.

For this reason we are calling on the Welsh Government to replace Jobcentre Plus in Wales with a new *'Youth Transitions'* service, which brings together a range of organisations, giving every young person access to professional careers advice and comprehensive tailored support to participate in education, training or work.

Recommendations

- ▶ Provide schools with additional funding to target those pupils who are often marginalised from mainstream education.
- ▶ Offer more support within schools for young people suffering with exam stress, including lessons on managing exam pressures.
- ▶ Provide all teachers with more training and support on how they identify and tackle bullying in schools.
- ▶ Develop a national non-formal *'Skills for Life'* curriculum to sit alongside the formal schools' academic curriculum.
- ▶ Guarantee all school age young people access to at least three weeks of meaningful workplace experience.
- ▶ Expand the provision of accredited open and online further education courses.
- ▶ Ensure every home and business in Wales has access to superfast broadband and that there is a network of public access computers available in the most deprived and rural communities in Wales.
- ▶ Extend schemes such as *'Young Recruits'* to provide all employers in Wales taking on young apprentices with an enhanced apprenticeship rate.
- ▶ Extend the age limit for funding education and training courses from 19 to 21-years-old.
- ▶ Establish a loan system available through Student Finance Wales to help people pay for alternative forms of Further Education and professional certificates.
- ▶ Expand the *'My travel pass'* scheme to offer discounted public transport to all young people undertaking an apprenticeship, further training or an education course.
- ▶ Replace Jobcentre Plus in Wales with a *'Youth Transitions'* service giving every young person access to professional careers advice and support to participate in education, training or work.

Work Clubs – Hirwaun YMCA

Hirwaun YMCA works with Rhondda Cynon Taff and the 'Communities First' programme to support the Anti-Poverty Strategy for the area.

It runs five successful work clubs, helping approximately 200 people throughout the local area. The clubs work by helping to support people back into the workplace through CV writing sessions, assistance with job searches and interview technique sessions.

In addition, five drop-in sessions targeted at young people provide places where they are offered accredited training, advice and guidance, as well as healthy living and personal fitness opportunities. An extensive volunteering programme also gives young people the opportunity to learn the soft skills that are essential in the work place and training that offers them the skills to transfer to the job market.

Last year, through the drop-in sessions young people completed over 100 accredited outcomes showing their commitment and dedication.

Many of these young people live in second and third generation workless families and the sessions are helping to end the cycle of unemployment.

Hirwaun YMCA also works with partners to offer courses such as Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS), First Aid at Work, Food Hygiene, Manual Handling, Health and Safety and Care within the Community. Young people who are not in employment are sign-posted to these courses to help provide them with the skills they need to find work.

The area's 'Your Future First' project also runs from Hirwaun YMCA. The project engages with young people who are not in employment, education and training and offers them 13 weeks intense training to up their skills and confidence and prepare them for the world of work. These include team building, numeracy, literacy, entrepreneurship using Dragon's Den style sessions and other employment skills to support participants.



We need more
Meaningful
work experience

Health and Wellbeing

We believe that everyone should enjoy the benefits of good health and wellbeing.

Having a positive physical, social and mental state is key to individuals achieving their personal goals and participating fully in society. This is why at YMCA we take a holistic approach, encouraging and supporting people to lead active and healthy lives from an early age, right through to adulthood.

Currently, more than three in 10 adults and one in 10 young people in Wales do not participate in any physical activity each week.¹⁷ To encourage more young people to participate in physical activity and help cement it in their lives, it is important that a wide range of opportunities are available.

Women and girls repeatedly spoke of a frustration with the lack of sporting opportunities afforded to them. As such, schemes should focus specifically on increasing opportunities for women and girls to increase their participation.

Many people also highlighted cost as one of the biggest barriers to being active, due to the reduction in community spaces that they can use free of charge.

YMCA, therefore, believes the Welsh Government should look to reduce the cost for people accessing local sports and leisure centres via the introduction of a national 'Teen Nights' initiative, which allows young people to access local sports and leisure centres across Wales for free or a significantly subsidised rate. This would involve each centre putting on targeted youth activity built around sports and physical activity every Friday or Saturday night.

It is vital that physical activity is complemented with a healthy, balanced diet. Parents and families have a big impact on the eating habits of young people and given that three in five adults in Wales are classified as obese, there is clearly a need for interventions targeted at the family level.¹⁸

However, the focus on being fit, healthy and having a balanced diet must not contribute to the pressures increasingly felt by people to look a certain way. More than half the UK population suffers from body image anxiety, a leading cause of depression, low self-esteem, poor participation at school and lack of progression at work.¹⁹

It particularly affects young people with appearance now being listed as the largest single concern for a third of girls and a fifth of boys by the age of 10.²⁰

YMCA believes the Welsh Government has an important role to play in putting pressure on media, businesses and advertisers in Wales to act responsibly and promote health and body diversity to help increase body confidence.

Access to health services is also critical for people to lead healthy lives; however, currently, many marginalised groups do not feel able to access the services they need. It is vital that the specific health needs of these individuals, including those from the LGBT community, are addressed and that they feel able to access services.

Substance misuse can have a dramatic impact on a person's health and prospects. While there has been a fall in the numbers drinking²¹ and using drugs in recent years,²² it is important that rehabilitation and support services are properly funded and that people in need feel able to access them without fear of criminalisation.

In addition, given the growth in the use of psychoactive substances and the challenge of taking a conventional enforcement approach,²³ YMCA is calling for the Welsh Government to launch a national awareness campaign targeted at young people. This should provide impartial harm reduction messaging about psychoactive substances to help them make informed decisions.

As well as focussing on physical health, YMCA believes it is important that mental health, as one of the biggest concerns raised by YMCA service users, is seen as a priority for the Welsh Government.

As a result of mental health issues, many people can feel isolated, unhappy, suffer from eating disorders, inflict self-harm and, tragically, even take their own lives.

One in four adults experience mental health problems or illnesses at some point in their lifetimes. Mental health and wellbeing is poorest in the deprived areas of Wales and these problems can often be passed through generations and can extend cycles of inequality.²⁴

**We help over 11,000
young people and
adults in Wales get active
every year**

With one in 20 children and young people in Wales now suffering from a diagnosable mental health disorder²⁵ and referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) increasing by over 100% during the course of the last Assembly,²⁶ the pressing need for action is clear.

Given that more than half of all adults with mental health problems were diagnosed during their childhood,²⁷ it is important that the Welsh Government provides training in mental health support and counselling to all those working with young and vulnerable people to enable them to identify the signs early and signpost to relevant support services.

While this focus on early identification is important, it is critical that the mental health services to which people are referred are both accessible and fit for purpose. YMCA, therefore, believes the Welsh Government should ensure parity in funding between mental health and physical health, as well as between adult and child and adolescent mental health services within Welsh NHS budgets.

A key aim of the increased funding should be to reduce the rising waiting lists, remodel mental health services away from a medical and clinic based model and to encourage more community and outreach delivery of services built around the needs of the people it supports.

Recommendations

- ▶ Commit to maintain and increase funding for young people to participate in a wide range of sports and physical activity in and outside of school.
- ▶ Launch a national awareness campaign targeted at young people, which provides harm reduction messaging relating to psychoactive substances.
- ▶ Ensure parity between access to sport and physical activity across the genders.
- ▶ Provide mental health support and counselling training to all professionals working, or frequently interacting, with young and vulnerable people.
- ▶ Introduce a national 'Teen Nights' initiative, which allows young people to access local sports and leisure centres for free or at a significantly subsidised rate every Friday or Saturday night.
- ▶ Give mental health the same priority as physical health within Welsh NHS budgets.
- ▶ Maintain and enhance the public spaces available for communities to access.
- ▶ Reduce waiting times for people accessing mental health services.
- ▶ Support initiatives in schools and communities that encourage young people and individuals to participate in purchasing and cooking healthy meals.
- ▶ Reform mental health services away from a medical and clinic based model by encouraging more community and outreach delivery of services.
- ▶ Ensure traditionally marginalised groups are able to access appropriate health care.
- ▶ Put pressure on media, businesses and advertisers to act responsibly and promote different and healthy body shapes, sizes, ages and ethnicities.
- ▶ Ensure that rehabilitation and support services are properly funded to help those with substance abuse issues and ensure that they are accessible without fear of criminalisation.

Art Psychotherapy - Llandoverly YMCA

Conscious that early intervention support is hard to access and that young people tend only to be able to seek professional help when they have experienced considerable mental deterioration, Llandoverly YMCA are using art psychotherapy to address the mental health needs of the young people in their community.

The project works with young people with a range of mental health needs including self-harm and alcohol/substance misuse. These can be a result of abuse, bereavement, bullying, effects of divorce and separation, being in foster care, adapting to an adoption situation and more.

As a result of this project, young people have a new place where their feelings can be expressed, heard and understood in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, utilising art-based psychotherapy.

Those involved are able to choose whether to attend in a group without an appointment or individual sessions. Some of the young people have initially accessed the art therapist informally and then gone on to arrange individual appointments for themselves.

Outcomes have included improved behaviour and an increased emotional literacy amongst the young people who take part, which helps them cope better with the difficulties in their lives. In addition, there has been enhanced self-esteem amongst young people who in turn are able to offer support to their peers.



Give mental health
the same priority
as Physical
HEALTH

Family Work

We believe every family should have the support they need to develop and lead more fulfilling lives.

The right start in life is crucial for a person's long-term development. It is for this reason that YMCA works with people from birth through to adulthood – supporting individuals and families to flourish.

With the introduction of the *'Flying Start'* scheme, significant progress has been made over the past three years to ensure young people get off to the right start in life.

Last year, the scheme supported more than 37,000 families in Wales; however, YMCA is continuing to see too many young people in need go without support and believes the Welsh Government should expand the scheme to work with more families across Wales.²⁸

The provision and role of health visitors should be at the centre of early intervention support for all families in Wales. Health visitors are in a unique position to offer and coordinate practical family-centred support but first the Welsh Government must invest in recruitment, training and organisation.

In addition, YMCA wants to see the Welsh Government further open up access to affordable childcare to help children and parents flourish and breakdown inequalities.

Given the important role that childcare can play in unlocking the potential of a young person and family, YMCA believes that a review should be undertaken of the childcare provision in Wales, to better consider how the support needs of parents in Wales can be met.

While it was right to initially focus the attention of the *'Integrated Family Support Services'* primarily on those 20,000 children in need, there are many more families across Wales who are seeking low levels of support. However, they are currently being ignored due to the high threshold levels set for this programme.²⁹

While it is recognised that this programme cannot provide intensive support to all families, YMCA believes the Welsh Government should work with local authorities to develop the *'Integrated Family Support Services'* programme to ensure families with lower level needs are still able to be appropriately signposted and are able to access preventative support and advice services.

To support this, YMCA believes that the *'Families First'* budget, which provides funding to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in Wales, should be extended to the end of the next Assembly.

YMCA is also calling on the Welsh Government to pilot innovative approaches during school holidays in the most deprived areas of Wales to ensure families can continue to access support work as their children get older.

Building on the success of initiatives such as East Renfrewshire Council's *'Holiday Programme'*, the Welsh Government should look to develop schemes that provide sport, physical activity and creative activities to promote health and wellbeing during the school holidays, something that was identified as beneficial by the young people consulted.³⁰

Another of the most significant issues raised were debt and money concerns. These concerns are understandable given an estimated 150,000 children in Wales live in families who are experiencing problem debt, and that young people themselves are beginning to accrue significant amounts of debt.³¹

The negative effects of problem debt are significant, impacting an individual's physical and mental health as well as housing, employment and relationships.

It is important that people begin learning money management and budgeting skills at a young age. Accordingly, YMCA is calling on the Welsh Government to help individuals and families manage and fight the threat of problem debt by incentivising credit unions to offer saving schemes and training, particularly, targeted at young people.

To further protect and support families and young people in Wales, the issue of crime also needs to be considered by the Welsh Government. Over the past five years youth crime has nearly halved, but those involved in developing this manifesto believed more could be done, in particular by utilising peer-led approaches to educate individuals on the impact and consequences of crime.³²

While overall crime has reduced, reoffending rates remain high, with more than a third of those leaving young offender institutions going on to commit another crime.³³ To reduce these levels, it is vital that young offenders are given appropriate support to help them transition back in to their communities.

**We support
7,000 children and
young people in Wales
at our out of school and
holiday clubs
every year**

Accordingly, young offenders should be provided with a range of support, including help securing accommodation and building relationships with their families before they leave custody, to provide them with a stable base on which they can start to rebuild their lives

Finally, it is important that the Welsh Government prioritises the support offered to those young people who go above and beyond for their families – young carers.

There are officially 29,000 young carers in Wales but, given the nature of unpaid care within families, in reality, the actual numbers are likely to be significantly higher.³⁴


With so many adult responsibilities, young carers told us how they can miss out on opportunities that other young people take for granted. Without adequate support, young carers disproportionately struggle with their health, as well as with education and employment.³⁵

Despite having moved up the political agenda, there is still little qualitative or quantitative research into the impact that having caring responsibilities has on young people in Wales and what support they feel would best support them and their families.

As a result, YMCA is calling on the Welsh Government to undertake a nationwide piece of research into the needs of young and young adult carers in Wales early within the next Assembly and for this to inform the strategy and service delivery for the next five years.

Recommendations

- ▶ Expand the *'Flying Start'* scheme to work with more families.
- ▶ Increase the number of health visitors operating across all areas of Wales.
- ▶ Undertake a review of childcare provision in Wales to better consider the support required by young working parents.
- ▶ Pilot a series of innovative school holidays programme in the most deprived areas of Wales.
- ▶ Expand the *'Integrated Family Support Services'* programme to ensure families with lower level needs are able to access preventative support and advice.
- ▶ Extend funding for the *'Families First'* scheme by the end of the next Assembly.
- ▶ Incentivise credit unions to offer saving schemes and initiatives targeted at primary and secondary children.
- ▶ Provide greater support to young offenders to help them reintegrate in their communities.
- ▶ Review the *'All Wales School Liaison Core Programme'* and *'SchoolBeat.org'* initiatives and examine how this could be supported by peer-led approaches to tackling youth crime.
- ▶ Commission a national piece of research into the needs of young and young adult carers in Wales.



Investigate
the needs of
young carers in
Wales

Time 4 Me, Young Carers Project YMCA Cardiff

'Time 4 Me' is one of the youth projects run by YMCA Cardiff, supporting young carers within the Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan area.

Young carers are children and young people from seven to 18 years old, who help care for a family member who lives with them. The family member could be experiencing difficulties with one or more of the following: learning disabilities, chronic illness, mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse or a physical disability.

'Time 4 Me' offers young carers a chance to have a break from their caring role and experience new opportunities, meet other young carers, make new friends, take part in activities, have fun, gain new skills and access support and advice. Over 220 young people access the service at any time and take part in a number of activities including going to the cinema and participating in sailing trips.

In addition, young carers accessing YMCA Cardiff's programme are given the chance to partake in the 'Life Skills' Project, which has been designed to help young carers develop their skills through activities, accreditation and one-to-one support.

The six session course works in a number of areas including confidence and team building, but can be tailored to suit the needs of the individual.

The project also engages schools, and acts as a link between young people and teachers. This allows for the needs of a young carer to be effectively catered for in schools and any issues dealt with in an effective manner, so as not to interfere with their academic work.

Democracy and Engagement

We believe that everyone should have a voice within society and be engaged fully in the democratic process.

This manifesto represents the voices of individuals and communities right across Wales, and YMCA would like to thank all of those who shared their stories, experiences and views to help in its development.

Through this manifesto, YMCA wants to challenge the status quo that too often sees the voices of marginalised groups forgotten by national decision makers. This is why YMCA is calling on all people from across Wales and the Welsh Government to join us in amplifying these voices to ensure they are heard and acted upon.

The young people we work with are passionate, articulate and active within their communities. This is why YMCA is a long standing partner in the 'Votes at 16' coalition and believes the Welsh Government should do all it can ensure 16 and 17-year-olds get the right to vote and stand in future Welsh elections.

YMCA is calling for the Welsh Government to appoint a Minister responsible for children and young people to help cement young people's voices at the heart of the decisions taken within the Assembly and to ensure it meets its duties set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As well as young people, YMCA is also dedicated to seeing other marginalised communities in which we work, such as LGBT groups and people who are homeless, having their voices heard by decision makers.

For this reason, we are calling on the Welsh Government to increase support for initiatives within communities that give these marginalised groups a voice and get them engaged in the democratic process.

This involvement in decision making should not be limited to the borders of Wales, but instead should extend internationally with marginalised groups such as young people being encouraged to play an active role in the global community.



**We have 11,000 young people in
Wales regularly participating
in our youth engagement work**

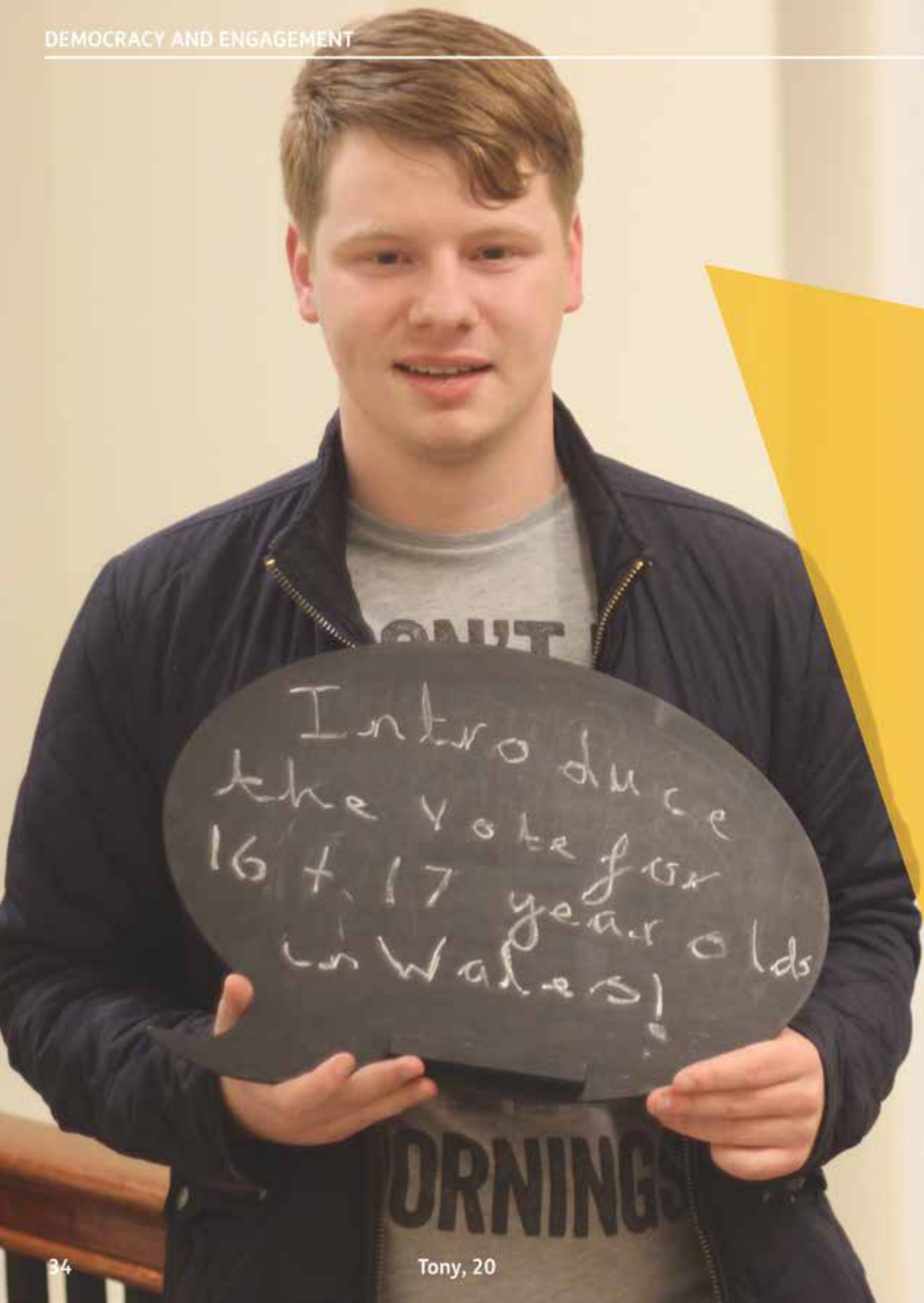
Young people tell us that when they are provided with the space to explore the international dimension to their lives, they are further empowered to involve themselves in their communities as active global citizens. The Welsh Government should, therefore, increase the support for initiatives that promote marginalised young people's inclusion in international issues, such as the *'Wales for Africa'* programme.

YMCA wants to see everyone have a stake in society and make informed choices as active citizens. We are calling on the Welsh Government to be the one that truly puts the people at the heart of decision making to help transform lives and communities right across Wales.

Recommendations

- ▶ Lobby for powers that reduce the voting and candidate age for all Welsh elections to 16.
- ▶ Appoint a Minister for Children and Young People.
- ▶ Support community-based initiatives that engage marginalised groups in the democratic process.
- ▶ Maintain the *'Wales for Africa'* programme and enhance initiatives for youth participation in global citizenship such as *'Hub Cymru Africa'*.





Tony, 20

Good Vibes, LGBT Youth Group YMCA Swansea

YMCA Swansea's *'Good Vibes'* project is a LGBT young persons led forum, which fights for and promotes LGBT rights for people living in their immediate and wider communities.

The group actively takes parts in local and national campaigns. Over the last year they travelled to Cardiff to participate in a public demonstration for *'Equality 2015'*, worked with the Welsh Government and Assembly to influence the *'Equalities Objectives 2016-20'* Agenda, and were actively involved in the *'Right to Vote @ 16'* and *'Assisting Young People into Work'* consultations.

'Good Vibes' members work as role models, peer mentors and volunteers, offering advice and guidance to young people experiencing challenges, such as bullying, discrimination or family breakdown, with the project supporting 69 volunteer placements to date.

Skilled at networking and communicating, the group also works with other organisations to deliver issue-based workshops to help support the community. They get involved with events, not only are they active in Swansea Bay Pride 2016, they also have a representative on their Board. To date, the project supported 221 young people into education, employment and training.

To help extend their reach *'Good Vibes'* offer support to others looking to set up LGBT groups. Two new groups have already started in rural north Wales and they are also working with a group in Cardiff. Ultimately they aspire to unite all LGBT groups across Wales to help strengthen the voice of the LGBT community.

Notes

- 1 Office for National Statistics (2015), Labour Force Survey
- 2 Welsh Government (2015), Homelessness data collection
- 3 Welsh Government (2015), New house building data collection
- 4 Welsh Government (2015), National Strategic Indicators data collections
- 5 Rent Officers Wales (2015), Letting Information Database
- 6 Welsh Government (2015), Budget
- 7 Welsh Government (2015), Homelessness data collection
- 8 Welsh Government (2015), National Strategic Indicators data collections
- 9 Welsh Government (2015), Pupils' Attendance Record
- 10 NSPCC (2015), ChildLine statistics
- 11 Ditch the Label (2015), Annual Bullying Survey
- 12 NSPCC (2015), ChildLine statistics
- 13 Welsh Government (2015), Lifelong Learning Wales Record
- 14 Welsh Government (2015), Lifelong Learning Wales Record
- 15 Office for National Statistics (2015), Labour Force Survey
- 16 YMCA England (2015) Safety Net or Springboard?
- 17 Welsh Government (2015), Welsh Health Survey
- 18 Welsh Government (2015), Welsh Health Survey
- 19 All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image and YMCA (2013), Reflections on Body Image
- 20 All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image and YMCA (2013), Reflections on Body Image
- 21 Welsh Government (2015), Welsh Health Survey
- 22 Home Office (2015), Crime Survey for England and Wales
- 23 Guardian and Opinion Research (2015), British Drug Survey
- 24 Welsh Government (2012), Together for Mental Health
- 25 Welsh Government (2015), Welsh Health Survey
- 26 National Assembly for Wales (2014), Inquiry into CAMHS
- 27 Kim-Cohen, Caspi and Moffitt (2003), Prior juvenile diagnoses in adults with mental disorder
- 28 Welsh Government (2015), Flying Start Data Returns
- 29 Welsh Government (2015), Children in need census
- 30 East Renfrewshire Council (2016), School holiday programme
- 31 The Children's Society and Step Change (2014), The Debt Trap
- 32 Ministry of Justice (2015), Youth justice annual statistics
- 33 Ministry of Justice (2015), Youth justice annual statistics
- 34 Office for National Statistics (2011), Census
- 35 Carers Trust (2015), Time to be Heard Wales

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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