

# YMCA



## WE ARE YMCA

Who we are and what we do



**We believe every young person should be able to develop their full potential in body, mind and spirit.**

# Who we are

YMCA is the oldest and largest charity working with young people in the world.

Across England and Wales, we operate as a federation with 116 local YMCAs that work independently to support young people in their communities.

While YMCAs work and respond locally, YMCA England acts as the national council, supporting each YMCA and acting as a national voice with Government and decision makers.

YMCAs in England and Wales are all part of a worldwide movement that together, helps more than 58 million people in 119 countries.



# What we do

Across England and Wales, there are thousands of young people who need our help. We do this by offering a broad range of services including housing, apprenticeships, health and fitness, and counselling.

But we don't just support young people in their time of need. Each YMCA delivers a range of services based on local needs, which can be anything from nurseries and after school clubs to performing arts centres and community cafes.

YMCA has specialist expertise in working with young men and women and we aim to be the voice of all young people.

Based in 740 communities across England and Wales, every day we inspire and support young people, helping them belong, contribute and thrive.

You'll find us getting involved in a wide range of services in your community.

**We focus our work around five key areas:**

## ACCOMMODATION

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

## FAMILY WORK

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

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

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

## TRAINING & EDUCATION

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

## SUPPORT & ADVICE

We believe every young person should have someone they can trust.

# How we work

A young man with dark hair, a lip piercing, and white headphones is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a grey t-shirt. The background is a blurred indoor space, possibly a community center or office, with other people and screens visible. A large yellow triangle is overlaid on the right side of the image.

We don't just think 'youth', we also think 'community.'

By coming along to a YMCA, a young person can become part of an inclusive community of people of all ages, faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

That's our youth-minded community approach.

## **At the heart of each community**

We tailor our services to meet the needs of people in your area. We support young people holistically. We don't just provide a bed, we also seek to help a young person gain the training, skills and confidence to lead independent lives.

# Where we are

## Across 740 communities in England and Wales, 116 YMCAs deliver:

- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Education and training
- ▶ Youth clubs
- ▶ Gyms
- ▶ Nurseries and crèches
- ▶ Performing arts clubs
- ▶ Disability programmes
- ▶ Before and after school clubs
- ▶ Mental health programmes

We also run just under 100 charity shops that work closely with YMCAs.

It's important to us that we have a national presence with local relevance so that we can respond to the specific needs of the communities we serve.





# YMCA Stories

Over the next few pages, you can read more about some of our programmes and the young people we have supported to transform their lives.

Follow YMCA stories at [ymca.org.uk/stories](https://ymca.org.uk/stories) to continue reading about the inspiring journeys of our young people and the services we offer to allow them to belong, contribute and thrive.



# ACCOMMODATION

---

## Supported Lodgings

Through Supported Lodgings and Nightstop, YMCAs accommodate young people in need, usually aged 16 to 18, in a host's home for anything from a few days to up to two years.

The young person becomes a member of the household, receiving the support of the family they live with as well as YMCA staff.

It provides a safe environment for young

people to learn the skills they need to take care of themselves as adults. While many in the scheme have had disrupted lives, they're able to make positive changes when they feel secure and supported.

There are currently nine YMCAs running the scheme with more than 200 host families approved to provide accommodation and support.

---

We're the largest voluntary sector provider of safe, supported accommodation for young people in England and Wales, housing more than 18,000 young people every year.







## FAMILY WORK

---

### Jack's story

When families go through difficult periods, it can be extremely upsetting for the children involved and in extreme cases, they choose to run away. YMCA's Reach Out Family Mediation Service is providing a lifeline to families who are struggling to keep relationships intact.

Jack was 16 and scared by his parents' behaviour when they drank. Home didn't feel safe.

Jack came to Reach Out and after a few sessions with the team, his confidence grew and he agreed for them to

contact his parents. The team helped Jack and his parents meet, talk and listen to each other. Jack had the courage to express how he was feeling and his parents responded with understanding. Everyone was able to agree a plan of action on how they would overcome their problems.

After a few weeks, the team checked in with Jack. His relationship with his parents had improved greatly and things at home were much better – resulting in one less young person becoming homeless.

---

Being part of a healthy, stable family gives a young person the best start in life. We offer a range of support to families including childcare services, before and after school activities, family mediation and parenting programmes. Nearly 24,000 young people visit our youth clubs every year, and more than 18,000 families use our childcare facilities.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### YMCA Mental Health Champions

Poor mental health is something that affects one in four people and it is increasing, especially among young people.

In April 2015, YMCA was awarded a Department for Education grant that allowed us to launch the Mental Health Champions (MHC) project to improve the mental and emotional wellbeing of young people aged 11 to 21.

Delivered through local YMCAs, the programme provides information and support to destigmatise mental health. It also supports adults to begin conversations with young people who might be suffering from mental health difficulties.

The programme offers a counselling service to young people who need more structured support and recruits and trains young volunteers to deliver key messages.

So far, more than 4,000 young people have been involved in the programme, stimulating conversation and increasing knowledge and awareness of mental health difficulties.

Our counselling service has reached 330 young people who were in need of a more structured form of therapy, with 90% experiencing decreased levels of distress as a result.

And we have worked with nearly 400 adults, helping to educate them so they are better equipped to help young people.

We are the largest voluntary sector provider of activities and services to promote health and wellbeing in England.



## TRAINING & EDUCATION

---

### Molly's story

The transition to adulthood is a difficult period. Many young people lack confidence and struggle with low self-esteem. Sometimes they need support to know what they are capable of, and to realise opportunities available to them.

Molly was a bright and talented teenager with a creative mind, but she grew up in an area with high youth unemployment. Her mother passed away when she was just 11 and her father was unable to cope, which meant Molly was left to take care of herself.

Molly felt abandoned and isolated and was bullied at school. The verbal abuse became physical and she changed schools three times, eventually leaving with no GCSEs, feeling 'useless' and without a future.

At the age of 17, Molly started training with YMCA. At first she found it hard to trust people, but as she met other young people who had gone through similar experiences she was able to focus on her studies and started believing in herself.

Molly now wants to help other people and become a bereavement counsellor.

---

Education is more than formal schooling – that's why YMCAs offer a range of education, skills-based training, placement and apprenticeship schemes, engaging nearly 70,000 people every year.





## SUPPORT & ADVICE

---

### Ross's story

When Ross was young, his mother and father were going through a difficult separation, which made the atmosphere at home confrontational and disturbing.

Ross rebelled by skipping school and doing drugs. The situation affected his mental health and he began to feel worthless and alone, even attempting suicide. He was admitted to a psychiatric hospital and when he was discharged became homeless.

Luckily, Ross moved into a YMCA and never looked back. We gave him the support and advice he needed to turn his life around.

*"They gave me the motivation and a lot of help to sort myself out including coming off drugs. Now I volunteer at YMCA. It's given me a sense of purpose and I feel happy knowing I can help people... without YMCA I would have absolutely nothing. It's just a brilliant organisation"*

Ross is now hoping to join the police force.

---

We're here for every young person in the community, supporting them through difficult times with a wide range of services. In each case, our aim is enabling the young person to grow and develop in every aspect of their life.



# Our History

**1844**

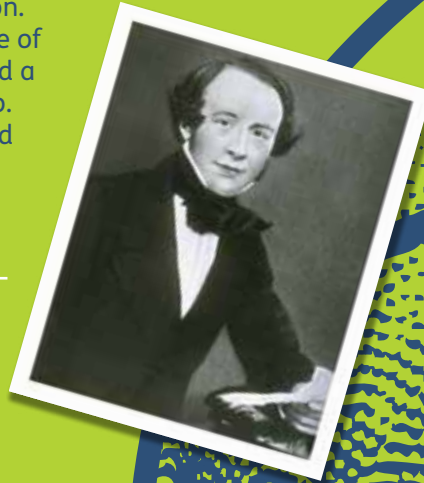
YMCA was founded by Sir George Williams – a draper in London. Concerned about the welfare of his fellow workers, he started a prayer and bible study group. This soon grew and attracted men from across London.

**1851**

YMCA begins to spread across the globe, as YMCAs are established in the USA and Canada.

**1879**

YMCA of the USA opens its first gym.



**1891**

YMCA invents basketball and goes on to invent volleyball in 1895.



## 1912

---

The first purpose built hostels are built in London and Cardiff.

## 1914

---

During World War One, the British YMCA extends its work across the Channel to support the troops.



## 1932

---

YMCA sets up the British Boys for British Farms initiative which benefits 25,000 young people.

## 1940

---

YMCA continues its war work during World War Two and mobile canteens are introduced to bring refreshments to the troops.

## 1959

---

Many English YMCAs start opening youth clubs to promote young people's personal development.





## 1970s

---

YMCA Training for Life is launched to help reduce unemployment among young people.

## 1984

---

Y Care International, the overseas development agency of YMCA in the UK and Ireland, is established.

**Today YMCA  
helps more than  
58 million people  
in 119 countries  
worldwide, working  
with young people  
of all races,  
religions and  
cultures.**

# Get Involved

Share your skills, or learn new ones, by volunteering at your local YMCA.

You can help with:

- ▶ Sports, exercise and fitness
- ▶ Youth work
- ▶ Day camps / holiday schemes
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Fundraising and publicity
- ▶ Administration and finance
- ▶ Mentoring
- ▶ Becoming a Board / committee member

Or you could help in a YMCA shop - more than 5,000 people are already volunteering in our shops and local YMCAs around the country.

Raise money for YMCA by taking part in a sponsored event, or getting together with people at your local YMCA to raise funds.

Support our vital work reaching out to more than 500,000 people every year by making a donation. Just £25 could pay for a hot meal and a warm bed at a YMCA.

Find out more at: [ymca.org.uk/get-involved](https://ymca.org.uk/get-involved)

Find out how you can support  
us at [ymca.org.uk](http://ymca.org.uk) or call  
**020 7186 9500**

To donate text  
**YMCA44 £5 to 70070**



Registered Charity No: 212810



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