



## YMCAs in Wales Minifesto 2016

Accommodation

Training and Education

Health and Wellbeing

Family Work

Democracy and  
Engagement

# 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.

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.



Andrew Jenkins  
Chair  
YMCAs in Wales



Anne-Marie Rogan  
Deputy Chair  
YMCAs in Wales

# Accommodation

## We believe that every 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. This is why YMCA is at the forefront of developing innovative low-cost housing and providing people who are homeless with a place to call their own and the support to build a better life.

### To support YMCA in this aim...

**We believe** more low-cost one bedroom homes should be built

**We believe** in the need to invest in the development of alternative models of housing

**We believe** more disused housing and business spaces should be turned into low-cost homes

**We believe** the *Help to Buy Cymru* scheme should be maintained

**We believe** the way social housing is allocated should be reviewed to help reduce waiting list times

**We believe** a national *Help to Rent* scheme should be introduced

**We believe** that *Supporting People* funding should be protected

**We believe** investment is needed in the housing and support offered to people who are homeless

**We believe** every area should have a Private Rented Sector scheme to support those leaving supported housing



# 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 long-term prospects. However, too many young people have a negative experience of education and opportunities to train and find meaningful employment in Wales once they have left education are often limited. This is why YMCA works every day to provide individuals with the skills, support and opportunities they need to find sustained employment and fulfil their true potential.

### **To support YMCA in this aim...**

**We believe** additional support should be targeted at students marginalised from mainstream education

**We believe** young people should get more support to deal with exam pressures

**We believe** teachers should be provided with more training and support to tackle bullying

**We believe** a national *Skills for Life* curriculum should be introduced to sit alongside the academic curriculum

**We believe** all students should receive at least three weeks of meaningful work experience

**We believe** more further education and training courses should be available online

**We believe** every home and business should have access to superfast broadband

**We believe** more should be done to encourage employers to hire apprentices

**We believe** people up to the age of 21 should be entitled to funding to help with training and education

**We believe** student loans should be made available to all those in further education or training

**We believe** all young people in further education or training should get discounted travel

**We believe** Jobcentre Plus should be replaced with a new employment support service for young people

# 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. However, too many people in Wales, both young and old, are not doing enough each week to stay fit and healthy and are unable to access the support they need when suffering with health problems. YMCA recognises the relationships that exist between physical, psychological and social wellbeing, this is why through all our work we take a holistic approach to encourage and support people to lead active and healthy lives.

### To support YMCA in this aim...

**We believe** investment is needed in community sport initiatives

**We believe** in equal access to sport and physical activity across the genders

**We believe** young people should be able to access local leisure centres for a discounted rate at weekly *Teen Nights*

**We believe** local public spaces available should be better maintained



**We believe** more initiatives are needed to get people involved in buying and cooking healthy meals

**We believe** media, businesses and advertisers should act responsibly and promote different body shapes and sizes

**We believe** traditionally marginalised groups should be able to access appropriate health services

**We believe** investment is needed in rehabilitation and support services for those with substance misuse problems

**We believe** a campaign is needed to provide young people with harm reduction messaging on psychoactive substances

**We believe** professionals working with young and vulnerable people should be trained on mental health issues

**We believe** mental health should be given the same priority as physical health in the NHS budgets

**We believe** waiting times for mental health services should be cut

**We believe** mental health services should become more community and outreach-based

# Family Work

**We believe that everyone should have the support they need to develop and lead more fulfilling lives.**

The right start in life is crucial for the long-term development of individuals and communities. However, the needs of too many families across Wales are currently going unmet and they struggle to just get by. It is for this reason that YMCA works with people from birth through to adulthood, supporting individuals and families to flourish.

**To support YMCA in this aim...**

**We believe** the *Flying Start* scheme should be expanded to work with more families

**We believe** the number of health visitors should be increased to provide support for families in need

**We believe** the Welsh Government should undertake a review of the childcare provision in Wales

**We believe** more innovative school holiday programmes should be piloted

**We believe** more families with lower level needs should be able to access preventative support and advice

**We believe** the *Families First* scheme should be continued

**We believe** credit unions should be encouraged to offer saving schemes and initiatives targeted towards young people

**We believe** young offenders should be provided with more support to reintegrate into their communities

**We believe** more peer-led approaches to tackling youth crime should be piloted

**We believe** more research should be undertaken into the needs of young and young adult carers

# Democracy and Engagement

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

Everyone should have a stake in society and be able to make informed choices as active citizens. However, the voices of marginalised groups are consistently overlooked by national decision makers in Wales and more widely. This is why at YMCA we believe in building our services around the needs and voices of those individuals and groups that are too frequently forgotten.

**To support YMCA in this aim...**

**We believe** in giving 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote and stand in elections

**We believe** a Minister for Children and Young People should be appointed

**We believe** community based initiatives are needed to engage marginalised groups in the democratic process

**We believe** the Welsh Assembly should enhance its initiatives for youth participation in global citizenship



Ellie, 15

## About us

**19 YMCAs serve nearly 130 communities across Wales**

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

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



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

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

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

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Designed by Mike Smith, YMCA Barry



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