

STRONGER TOGETHER

Autumn 2016



ACCOMMODATION CRISIS EDITION

One life at a time –

Together we *can* help young people overcome the effects of the Accommodation Crisis



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Welcome to *Stronger Together*

Dear YMCA Supporter,

My name's Si Johns. I'm a Housing Manager at YMCA Exeter, and I'd like to thank you for supporting so many vulnerable young men and women through some of the most challenging times ever.

Support services for young people across the country are at breaking point. And when it comes to accommodation, it's even worse. In the past three months alone, our waiting list here has doubled. There's so little support for vulnerable young people now that they almost need to be in a life-or-death situation before they can get help.

I'm talking about young people like Danni, whose story you can read about in this special Accommodation Crisis edition of *Stronger Together*. When Danni first turned to us, we had to tell her we couldn't help. It felt so cruel. But the good news is that since then, we've been able to give Danni a room at YMCA, along with the vital support she needs to move on in life. And it's thanks to the generosity of supporters like you.

You can also read about the many ways in which you're enabling YMCA to develop bold new solutions to help homeless young people like Matthew and Stan. And you can discover how you're helping to get homeless young people into work and into affordable housing and how you're helping us to influence Government Housing policy.

Thank you so much.



Si Johns
Deputy Chief Executive and Housing Manager
YMCA Exeter



Si Johns
YMCA Exeter

“Every time we turn a homeless young person away, it's an Accommodation Crisis for them”

Wherever possible, we use photographs of the young people we are helping, like Shannon and Brandon. In other cases, we've used models and changed names to protect their identities.

The Accommodation Crisis explained

The human face of the crisis



“It can happen to anybody. All of a sudden everything you’re used to just goes and suddenly you find that you’re on your own, fending for yourself. There’s only one place I’d be without YMCA – and that’s on the streets.” Sam

Why it has reached crisis point

- ▶ Housing support is being cut.
- ▶ Private rents are much too high for most young people to afford.
- ▶ There is too little help reaching young people before they get to a crisis point of becoming homeless.
- ▶ YMCA simply doesn’t have enough rooms for all the young people who desperately need them.
- ▶ There isn’t enough ‘move-on’ accommodation for young people to settle in once they are ready to live more independently.

Together, we can make a difference



YMCA believes that no young person should ever be without a safe place to stay. **Yet every single hour of the day and night**, one more young man or woman finds themselves homeless.



over
10,000
homeless young people are given a place to stay at YMCA every night

YMCA is doing everything we can to help vulnerable young people get a roof over their heads, and you can read more about these initiatives in this special edition of *Stronger Together*.



13,280
young people were homeless last year

But the reality is, we can’t help everyone that needs us, which means all too many young people are still trapped in an Accommodation Crisis and in urgent need of our help.

Your support is already making a huge difference to so many young lives, and we hope you’ll help give more of them a safe place to stay.

£20

A donation of £20 today could help pay for one night’s accommodation for a young person, including an emergency toiletries pack.

“Sleeping rough was the worst experience of my life. Now I’ve got a roof over my head – thanks to you”

When 20-year-old Danni first turned to YMCA, she was desperate for somewhere to stay. Tragically, we had to give her the worst news possible

“I spoke to a support worker at YMCA who said there was no room for me.”

Danni was trapped in the Accommodation Crisis that is affecting so many vulnerable young people like her. Because there is so little affordable housing for homeless young people, emergency housing like ours is almost always full.

Of course, we put Danni on our waiting list and told her we’d be in touch the minute we had somewhere for her to stay. We also alerted all the other services that might be able to help her. But the pressure they’re under is so great that they didn’t have any space either.

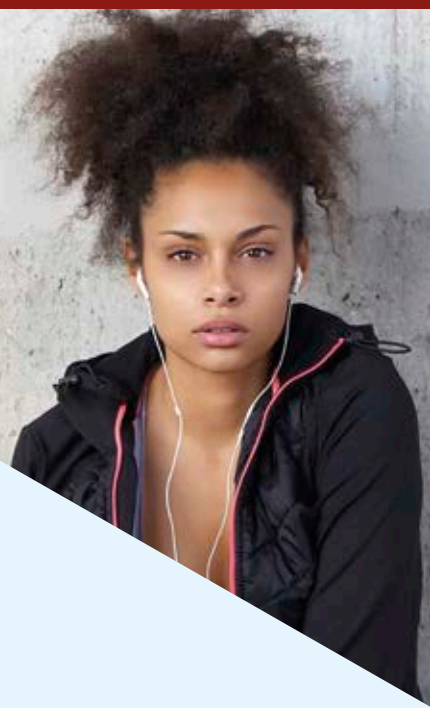
“I slept in a car park that night. It was the worst experience of my life. It was horrible. I was woken up by a bloke kicking me in the stomach.”

Danni spent seven months sleeping rough and sofa surfing. Then we gave her the news she’d been waiting for. We had a room for her. She’s been here for a month now.

“I’ve got a roof over my head. And loads of support. If I hadn’t come to YMCA, I would literally be dead by now. No food, no money, nothing. My support worker’s amazing.”

Danni’s working hard to find a job. Her support worker is with her every step of the way. She hopes to move on from her room at YMCA as soon as she’s working so she can leave space for another homeless young person like her. She’s lucky, because YMCA Exeter also has move-on houses for young people like her. She’s the living proof that together we can help vulnerable young men and women to get through the Accommodation Crisis.

And it’s thanks to YMCA supporters like you.



£30

A donation of £30 today could provide essentials such as toiletries and bedsheets to help a young person like Danni make a fresh start.

Helping young people tackle the Accommodation Crisis – together

Food for thought

How a YMCA pop-up restaurant is helping Matthew save for the deposit on a flat

Matthew had a good job as a manager and was renting a room of his own. Then his landlady decided she wanted to get rid of her tenants. She increased the rent so much that Matthew could no longer afford to live there. He moved in with one of his 'friends', who charged him a huge amount of money just to sleep on a sofa.



But living there made it impossible for Matthew to keep his job – his new landlord had an all-night party when Matthew had to go to work in the morning. And when Matthew became unemployed, his 'friend' threw him out. Matthew's world fell apart.

Matthew slept that first night in the waiting room of his local hospital. He was homeless for four months. Eventually, supporters like you helped him find a safe place to stay at YMCA.

Matthew's now working at a pop-up restaurant called Fat Macy's, along with five other YMCA residents. Fat Macy's has been set up by a YMCA support worker specifically to help young people like Matthew save for the deposit on a place to live. The young people working there are paid the equivalent of £10 per hour straight into their secure housing deposit fund. Once they have a tenancy agreement in place, the deposit is paid directly to the landlord.

“When you're working for the minimum wage it can be hard to save at all, let alone hundreds of pounds for the deposit on a room of your own. Now I'm working hard at Fat Macy's, having fun, and saving money too. It's brilliant.”

And as well as his savings, Matthew has just completed a course in Business Administration and has been awarded a certificate. He's one step closer to another good job and a home of his own.

“I'm another person because of YMCA and Fat Macy's basically.”



£50

A donation of £50 today could pay for tutoring to help one more young person like Matthew gain the skills they need to move on from YMCA.

Helping more young people get a roof over their heads



“It’s given me somewhere to be myself” Stan, Y:Cube resident

How design innovation is helping young people escape homelessness thanks to YMCA supporters

You may remember that YMCA has recently been developing Y:Cube – a radical approach to affordable housing – thanks to supporters like you. We’re delighted to announce that the first Y:Cube development opened its doors to 36 young residents in Mitcham last September.

Stan, 19, was one of the first young people to move in. He’d been homeless for a long time before coming to YMCA. He says: “I’d sleep on friends’ sofas, on park benches, all while trying to hold down a career. When I moved in, I was able to build my life back up again.” Stan has severe haemophilia, and his homelessness had made him very ill. “Now I’ve got somewhere to store my medication too.”

Micky is also finding Y:Cube has changed his life completely. He was homeless for five months before he secured his place with us. That made it very difficult for him to keep in touch with his young daughter, because he was initially sleeping in his car, and the hostel he eventually found wouldn’t allow guests. As Micky explains: “Having this place really helped for seeing my daughter.”

Y:Cube could help so many more homeless young men and women change their lives. The next stage is to roll it out to new areas. YMCA London South West and Aecom are currently working on new developments.



Y:Cube housing

£100

A donation of £100 today could pay for a Lifeskills course to equip a young person like Stan with the skills they’ll need to live independently.

Rebuilding properties and young people’s lives

The Y-Build scheme is enabling young people to learn on the job as apprentices in building and other trades. Apprentices leave with valued NVQ qualifications and the chance of building a better future for themselves.



Turning empty homes into affordable homes

Through the Empty Homes scheme, YMCA is currently working with landlords to make properties that are standing empty available for vulnerable young people. YMCA guarantees their rent, and then helps young men and women with their deposit. Laura, who lives in a house provided through the scheme says:

“YMCA found me a permanent home so me and my son can have safety and security in our lives.”

Campaigning to make housing more accessible

YMCA’s policy team is working closely with Government to make sure that affordable housing for vulnerable people is on the national agenda.

Helping young people find a sanctuary through our family work



“I feel like a different person”



Shannon explains how a YMCA project in Lincoln is helping young people like her transform their lives, thanks to supporters like you.

Before 18-year-old Shannon started coming to The Showroom at YMCA Lincolnshire three years ago, she'd reached breaking point. She'd suffered physical abuse at home and been excluded

from school. She was also suffering from problems with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Shannon describes The Showroom as a 'sanctuary'. Since coming here, her life has improved beyond recognition.

“I tried ending my life because I didn't want to be here anymore because of family problems and all the other problems I've got. I've got ADHD and it's hard to focus on one thing.”

“Since I've been coming to The Showroom, everything has changed. I'm happier at home. The family treat me better.

“The Showroom is a place you can come with your family. You have to pay £1 for a child. Adults come free. It's a really good place to come to. We've got a climbing room and a sports cage. It's really great to be able to just chill out and enjoy yourself with your family with no pressure.

“I did work experience here. Then I started coming here more often. I started doing some volunteering. I've really enjoyed it. I'm more confident. I didn't have teamwork skills but now I'm building them up. I've also done training courses with them. Hopefully I'm going on to study some more.

“It was scary at first. Now it's amazing. I love doing it. Working with young children, it's hard work but it's fun at the same time. It's down to Showroom for helping me. Everyone involved here. They're all amazing.

“If it wasn't for YMCA, I'd be sat at home either playing on my Xbox or having fights with my mum. When I came here, I could start living again. I just want to say a massive thank you for being there for me and making me feel a lot happier with life.”

£25

A donation of £25 today could be used to pay for three hours of support to help a young person like Shannon change their life.

Transforming lives through our health and wellbeing services

How you're helping people with additional needs through sport



Brandon (far right) has cerebral palsy

Every young person should have the chance to take part in sport. Not just because it's a good way to improve fitness and make new friends, but because it can help them completely transform their lives.

Yet it can be all too easy for young people with additional needs to be excluded from sport. But that's all changing – thanks to OnSide. It's a specially designed programme that makes sure no one is left out – and you're helping to make it happen.

Brandon was 14 when he first came to OnSide at YMCA Plymouth. He has cerebral palsy and was a wheelchair user. He was shy and quiet and lacking in confidence.

Then Brandon started to take part in rebound therapy on the trampoline. His mum was shocked he'd even joined in, let alone that he could trampoline. He grew stronger and fitter and started to socialise with the other group members.

Brandon's 17 now and comes to OnSide every week. He's one of the most confident members of the group and he's hoping to start on the Sports Leader training course later this year.

But most importantly of all, as a direct result of coming to OnSide, Brandon can now walk independently and no longer needs a wheelchair.

£40 A donation of £40 today could help us improve inclusive access to sport for more young people like Brandon.

To donate now

Call
020 7186 9518



Fill in the enclosed **donation form**



Visit ymca.org.uk/crisis

Gifts for Good

We've decided to save money by not producing a Gifts for Good catalogue this year. But we understand that many of our supporters look forward to buying Gifts for Good as Christmas presents for friends and family, so please do give us a call on **020 7186 9518** if you'd like to place an order.

Your gift will help change a young person's life.



A Christmas dinner



A warm bed for the night



Christmas dinner and an essentials pack



Tutoring and books



Room sponsorship

National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (Incorporated). A limited company registered in London no. 73749
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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