



YMCA

Youth-Friendly Communities

**Making your area the
best place to grow up**

We want to build communities where young people are able to belong, contribute and thrive. Regardless of where they are in the country, a young person has the right to feel safe, to live in a secure home, and to enjoy being young.

Young people have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with their world turned upside-down. Opportunities have been taken away from them, and many of their social ties have been broken. Two fifths of young people say they worry about the impact lockdown has had on their mental health.

The challenges young people face is compounded by a decade of funding pressures which have meant less support, less facilities, and less opportunities for them in the first place.

Youth services have been cut by **70%** in ten years, **1-in-5** homeless people are under 25, and over **11%** of young people are not currently believed to be in education, employment, or training. The further impact of the pandemic means that young people need structured support more than ever, but it is harder to find.

With the right guidance and proper inclusion young people can be helped to thrive as active and resilient members of their local community. They can be proud to give back to an area which looks out for them.

What is this guide for?

This guide is designed to show local stakeholders and elected officials the six key steps that need to be taken to help young people in their area, and make sure that they are properly included and supported. We want to use this as an opportunity to start conversations between local decision makers and local stakeholders on what actions are required to make your area a youth friendly community.



A youth-friendly community is one where...

1 Every young person has access to quality youth services

Youth services exist to provide a sense of belonging, a safe space, and the opportunity for young people to enjoy being young. A decade of funding pressures has meant youth services have endured continued and damaging cuts, leaving young people feeling more isolated, lonely, and vulnerable to gangs and crime.

Young people need these services more than ever, and it is vital that they are widely available and properly resourced.

This means:

▶ Investing in Youth Clubs

Making sure your area has enough safe spaces for young people to go to, off the streets and away from potentially difficult and strained home lives.

▶ Funding for Youth Workers

Making sure young people have an adult they can speak to when they need help and support about issues they're facing, or their mental health.

▶ Providing opportunities

Making sure you provide opportunities for young people to enjoy being young, offering spaces for them to socialise and experiences that build their confidence.



In England and Wales more than **4,500** youth work jobs cut and **760** youth centres closed since 2010



£978 million less funding in Youth Services since 2010 across England and Wales



21% of those cautioned or convicted of knife crime in England and Wales were aged 10-17

A youth-friendly community is one where...

2 Every young person has a safe and secure home

No one should have to rough sleep, or live in unstable or unsuitable homes. And a young person should never feel trapped in the support system when they're ready to rebuild their lives independently. This harms the ambitions and wellbeing of young people, and blocks support from being provided to those coming through the system.

Young people need safe, secure and affordable housing in their local area, and support when things go wrong.

This means:

▶ Properly investing in emergency accommodation

Making sure emergency accommodation is available for young people when they need it, so that they never need to spend a night on the streets.

▶ Creating genuinely affordable housing

Making sure that the local property market contains genuinely affordable housing which is achievable for young people who may rely on housing benefit or low paid work.

▶ Offering support to move on from supported accommodation

Making sure young people looking to rebuild their lives can overcome financial barriers, by offering a deposit support scheme when saving up is challenging.



185 16-24-year-olds are made homeless or threatened with homelessness, every day across England and Wales



One-in-three (35%) single homeless people accessing accommodation in England are young people aged 18-25



50% of young people in supported housing say they're prevented from moving on by not having enough savings for a rental deposit

A youth-friendly community is one where...

3 Every young person feels able to access a stable job and the training they need

Local job opportunities should always be available to young people, wherever they live. Businesses looking for their feet should recognise that young people have a role to play, and be open to providing job opportunities and work experience. If young people need to retrain or develop their skills, this should be readily available.

Young people deserve to have work and training opportunities available in their area.

This means:

► **Providing avenues to employment and work experience**

Making sure that job opportunities are being made available for young people in your area, and that local businesses offer chances to build and gain work experience.

► **Investment in training**

Making sure young people are able to access training programmes to build their skills, develop their confidence, and retrain for new jobs.

► **Offering accessible and affordable transport**

Making sure transport is not a barrier to young people accessing work opportunities or local facilities.



11.6% of 16- to 24-year-olds in the UK are not in education, employment or training



56% of young people are worried about falling behind at school during lockdown



As a result of COVID-19, **41%** of young people are worried about getting a job after school

A youth-friendly community is one where...

4 Every young person can feel safe on the streets and have confidence in the police

Everyone should be able to live safely and free from danger within their area. Ensuring all people are protected must always be a priority. It is also vital that meaningful work is done to build trust between young people and local police to create strong, lasting relationships.

Young people need to feel secure in their local area and included in discussions as to how to keep their community safe.

This means:

► **Taking positive actions**

Making sure that the police is seen to be addressing issues which effect young people and is active in eradicating all forms of discrimination.

► **Dedication to community outreach and engagement**

Making sure building relationships within communities and with young people directly is a priority. Working constructively to include young people in how their area is kept safe.

► **Commitment to continuous improvement**

Making sure there is proper analysis of current operational procedures and how they impact on young people from different backgrounds.



54% of young Black people do not trust the police to act without prejudice or discrimination



Black people are almost **10** times more likely than White people to be stopped and searched



22% of young people fear being victim of a crime in public

A youth-friendly community is one where...

5 Every young person is entitled to good mental and physical wellbeing

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the physical and mental health of young people. They have seen their world flipped upside down and had their education and development stalled. Being stuck inside, has also meant that many of their opportunities to be active have disappeared.

Young people have the right to good physical and mental health.

This means:

▶ **Investing in openly available physical activities**

Making sure that every young person has facilities close to them which allow them to keep fit, healthy, and engaged with other young people without financial barriers

▶ **Prioritising mental wellbeing**

Making sure that fostering positive mental health is a priority, and that those who work with young people in your area know what to do when someone is struggling.

▶ **Addressing the impact of lockdown**

Making sure that young people are able to restore and maintain their physical and mental health to counter the impact of lockdown and build their mental resilience.



58% of young people are worried about having an environment safe from COVID-19 to see friends



1-in-5 young people aged 17-22 identified as having a mental disorder in England



51% of children aged 3-17 in Wales engage in 60 minutes of physical activity a day

A youth-friendly community is one where...

6 Every young person feels valued and included in their community

Feeling included within society is key for every young person. Having a stake in the area in which they live is essential to ensuring that they care about their community and its future. Young people must be included in the decision-making processes which impact the area around them, and should be at the heart of discussions on how communities rebuild in a post COVID-19 world.

Young people deserve to feel like an essential part of their community, and that they are always considered and have a role to play in decisions that will affect their local area.

This means:

▶ **Ensuring they are in social and civic activities**

Making sure that they have the chance to play an active role in their community, with the opportunity to give back.

▶ **Including them in decisions which affect their lives**

Making sure that young people involved in discussions that take place to decide the future of their area. They should always feel included in their community and feel like they have a voice to offer.

Making it a reality

Together, we can create communities where young people feel valued and included. Providing the right help to young people at this moment could not be more important. Showing them, they are valued and an important part of their area will allow them to belong, contribute and thrive.

Get in touch to talk to us about how you can build a youth-friendly community in your area. We can offer guidance relevant to your local what's needed and put you in touch with a YMCA on the ground so you can include young people in your decision making.

Get in touch, email us today campaigns@ymca.org.uk

About YMCA



101 local YMCAs support young people in **700** communities



YMCA supports **572,000** young people each year



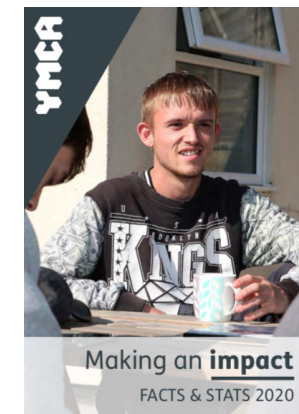
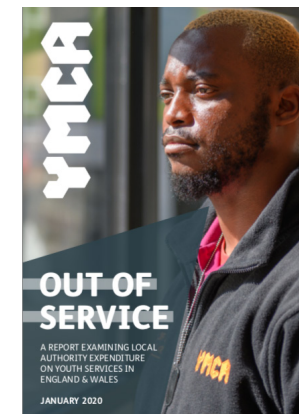
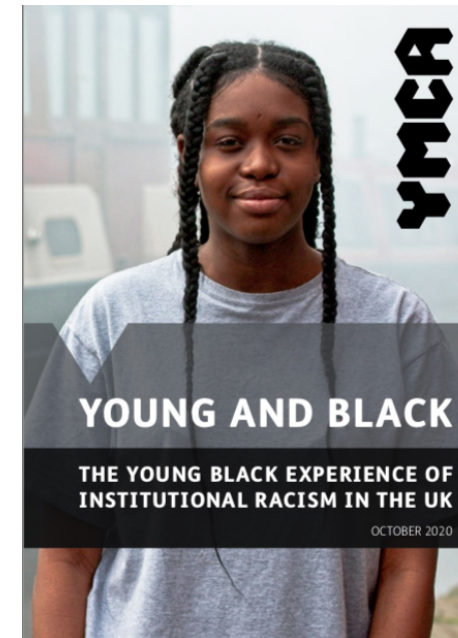
Largest voluntary provider of supported housing in England & Wales



YMCAs connect almost **72,000** young people with someone to talk to

Further reading

All the statistics and data used in this document can be found in the below reports.



YMCA England & Wales
10-11 Charterhouse Square
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www.ymca.org.uk
020 7186 9500

Registered Charity No: 212810
Registered Company No: 73749
Homes and Communities Agency No: LH2204

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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