

YMCA
DOWNSLINK GROUP



Our Impact 2021/22

YMCA

Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

Creating a Brighter Future for Children, Young People and Families

At YMCA DownsLink Group we believe that everyone should have a fair chance to discover who they are and what they can become. The essential building blocks for a full and rewarding life include: a safe home; acceptance; guidance; friendship; physical and mental health; academic support; employment skills; and access to real opportunities. Many young people grow up without one or more of these.

Wherever we operate across Sussex and Surrey we provide these critical foundations. Our Services are found in the heart of communities, working with children, young people and their families, offering support & advice, housing, family & youth work, health & wellbeing, and training & education.

Our Impact 2022

Post pandemic recovery was a key part of 2022. Although our services continued throughout the pandemic, the lifting of Covid restrictions allowed us to resume face-to-face work with young people in our counselling and youth services. This meant we supported 10,273 children and young people last year, an increase of nearly 4,000 on the previous year.

In addition, our housing provision increased and every night we provided a safe home to over 787 young people in Sussex & Surrey. More than that, we supported them onto a pathway to a brighter future.

10,273

children, young people and families used our services

5,105

children, young people and families provided with counselling, wellbeing and emotional support

787

 people given a home every night

89%

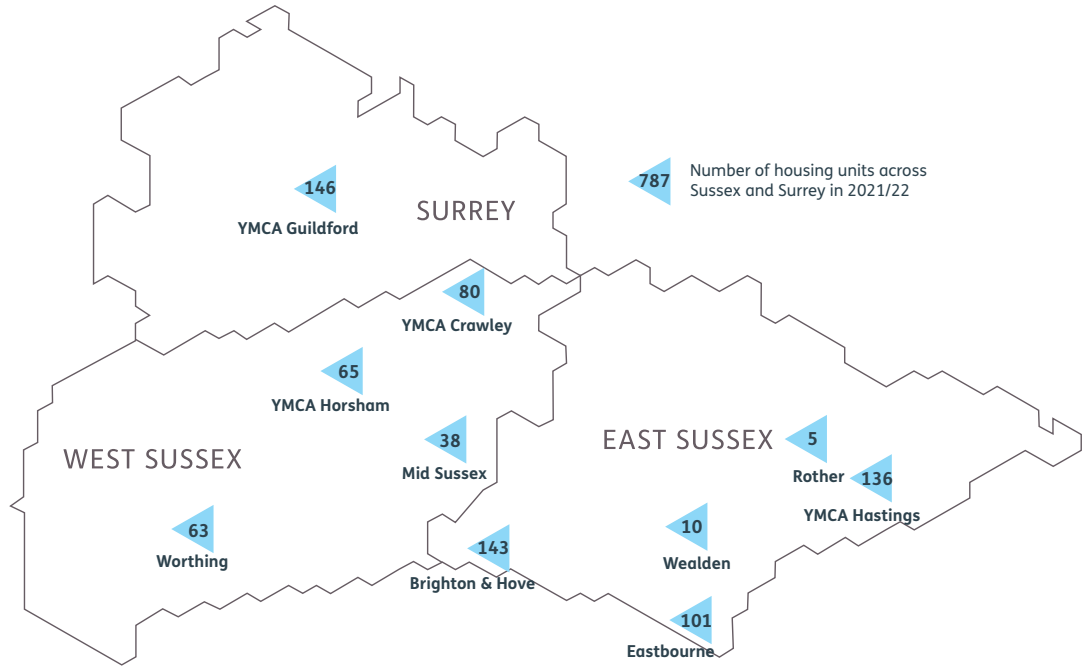
 moved on successfully to independence

142

 volunteers supported our work

Helping young people belong, contribute and thrive.

Where we work



Our services



YMCA ACCOMMODATION



YMCA MORE THAN A ROOM

Housing, support and groupwork, enabling young people to live independently and



YMCA CHAPLAINCY

Providing a non-judgemental space to discuss, explore, listen and support



YMCA DIALOGUE

Counselling and therapeutic support for children, young people and families



e-wellbeing

POWERED BY
YMCA DownsLink Group



YMCA YAC

Advice and support for young people aged 13-25



YMCA WISE PROJECT

Supporting children and young people to stay safe in their relationships



Y'S GIRLS MENTORING

Enabling girls to belong, contribute and thrive

Committed to Tackling **Youth Homelessness** in our **Communities**

Youth homelessness continues to grow in our community. At the start of the pandemic we saw a 61% increase in the number of young people presenting as homeless. Although this dropped in 2021, it has stabilised at around 37% higher than pre pandemic levels. This continues to put a strain on our services, from our Youth Advice Centres, to our supported housing projects.

Despite the challenges, our commitment to tackling youth homelessness in our communities is unwavering. The number of beds provided in 2022 increased from 764 to 787. This year we opened a much needed 47 bed, 24 hour supported accommodation in Hastings.


On average a young person lives with us for around two years. This stability, after a chaotic start in life, can make all the difference to their long term future.

We offer so much more than just a bed. We give young people a home and put them back on a pathway to independence. We support young people to get back into education, training, or employment. One-to-one sessions with project workers develop confidence, emotional wellbeing, and key life skills so that our young people can fulfil their ambitions and 'move on' successfully.



Last year **315**
young people
moved on to
independence.





“I want to thank everyone for being a part of my life and helping me come out of my shell and believe in me. I had the greatest three years at the YMCA and I hope someone else will also benefit as much as I did from all your care and support.”

- Susie

Susie's story

Susie was the second youngest from a big family with older children and a single mum. Her mum worked very hard to look after the family and, despite moving around a lot, it was a happy home. Then her mum's boyfriend abused her little sister and everything changed. After a difficult time involving the police, courts and social services her little sister was moved into foster care. Because Susie was 18, she ended up alone and estranged from her family. Living in a rural location Susie was scared and lonely. She stopped going to college and was finding it hard to cope. That's when she was referred to YMCA DownsLink Group and was given a home in our 24- hour accommodation.

"My future has been looking brighter and brighter ever since joining the YMCA. I'm eternally grateful for all the staff and those who I don't get to see that help us in any way possible to make sure we're on the right paths."

In September 2021 Susie left to take up a university place to study astrophysics.



Our success rate for **positive move-ons** is **89%** with several moving to our own transitional housing.

Young People's **Mental Health**

We're currently facing a societal crisis around young people's mental health and wellbeing. As demand continues to rise and waiting times increase, young people are struggling to get the support they need. Many deteriorate whilst waiting to be seen. We're doing all we can to address this. We're working closely with schools, statutory bodies, and our NHS partners to try and secure funding to recruit more specialist staff and counsellors.

We're continuing to invest in digital wellbeing services, such as the e-wellbeing platform (www.ewellbeing.co.uk) so that young people can find information and selfhelp advice online. In 2022 we increased the capacity of our Self-Harm Learning Network, in partnership with West Sussex Mind and Allsorts, to tackle the increasingly prevalent and distressing issue of self-harm. It provides resources for young people, and training for parents and professionals.

In addition, our Mental Health Champions programme was extended. It empowers and encourages young people to develop ways to enhance emotional wellbeing in their schools.

“I enjoyed being a Champion because I can help others with mental health and help them feel safer.”



11,767 visitors to the e-wellbeing platform, seeking support for anxiety, self-harm and a way to access mental health services.

Supporting Young People in Their Communities

Early prevention provides the best outcome for children, young people and families. Our support & advice services are a crucial part of our YMCA.

Y's Girls

An award-winning, mentoring initiative that matches trained volunteer mentors with female-identifying young people to support them to overcome challenges and achieve their potential.

YMCA WiSE (What is Sexual Exploitation)

During 2021/22 YMCA WiSE provided one to one support to 155 young people who were being sexually exploited across East Sussex, Brighton and Surrey.

“My WiSE worker has been a massive help. I am more able to talk about my problems and have many resources and strategies to cope with flashbacks and things that happen because of the trauma.”

YMCA YAC (Youth Advice Centres)

Our Youth Advice Centres continue to offer a vital, walk-in, service to young people needing support and advice around a range of issues, from bullying to homelessness.



Henry Smith MP visiting The LGBTQ+ Haven at Crawley YAC. It's a safe space for local young people with a dedicated team of LGBTQ+ youth workers and volunteers.

We run a number of youth engagement projects with different partners to reach children and young people in their communities. Room to Rant, is a partnership with AudioActive, that gives young men aged 16-25 a space to get stuff off their chest, through rap and spoken word workshops. We deliver homelessness prevention workshops in schools across East Sussex and in Eastbourne run much needed youth clubs and holiday activities.



This year, Brighton YAC opened a sustainable, healthy, **low cost food market** for 16-25 year-olds in Brighton.



Community Support

2022 has been a year when community support has shone through. From community bakers providing local projects with 250 bakes a week, to volunteers working alongside residents to create flourishing gardens.

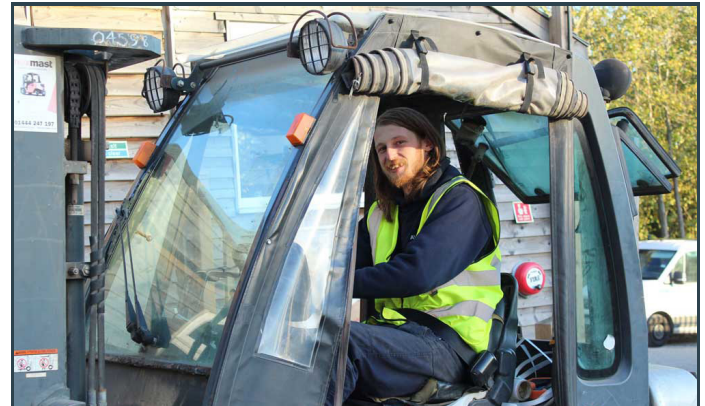
Local businesses have also played a key role. Almost 40 have joined our Membership Movement to help end youth homelessness and a further 10 have become Room Sponsors. Others have generously donated their time via mentoring or work experience for residents.



Last year **142 active volunteers** supported our work, providing over **£80,000** worth of support to our projects and young people.



Sussex Bake Down made celebration birthday cakes for our residents as well as providing weekly homemade baked goods for our housing projects.



Jack was offered a permanent job with our partner AVS Fencing after a successful placement project.

Can you support vulnerable young people in your community?

Every night we provide accommodation to more than 787 young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We reach thousands more every year through our youth advice centres, community and school counselling services, family mediation and other youth focussed services.

We could not do this vital work without your support – below are four easy ways you can make a difference to a vulnerable young person.



Take on a challenge!

Mad for marathons? Delighted to sky dive? Wild for walking? Our events programme involves these and much more – there is something for everyone! Get fit, take on a new challenge and help raise much-needed funds for young people.



Volunteer

Volunteers play a vital role in our services and projects and volunteering is a wonderful way to gain experience, learn new skills and make new friends. Whether supporting at an event, providing meals for residents in supported accommodation or mentoring a young person, there is a role for you.



Get your business involved

A corporate partnership with us enables you to make a dramatic difference to local young people. We will work with you to develop a tailor-made programme that fits with your culture, enhances your brand and helps boost your engagement with staff and clients.



Keep in touch!

Sign up to our chaplaincy or e-newsletter and hear from some of the young people we support, as well as being the first to know about upcoming events, opportunities and updates.

Interested? Simply email fundraising@ymcadlg.org to get started.

"We don't believe anyone should be homeless and it's even more tragic when that person hasn't even reached adulthood. Living in Brighton, brewing locally and supporting a local charity was really important to me, and we've now been able to bring all those things together and I can't think of a better charity to support."

- Big Hug Brewing

"Through difficult circumstances during the pandemic, it has been an important duty for Amplicon to offer support, and we are delighted to be partners with YMCA. We truly hope that more local businesses can continue to pledge their support for this cause."

- Amplicon

YMCA

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