



SNAPSHOT

2014/15

Support and Advice
Health and Wellbeing
Family Work
Training and Education
Accommodation

YMCA
DOWNSLINK GROUP

Welcome!



Pete Jeffrey, YMCA DLG Chair

It has been an exciting and busy year for the organisation following our merger, in April 2014, between Sussex Central YMCA and Guildford YMCA to form YMCA DownsLink Group (YMCA DLG). We have focused on ensuring the merger built on our respective strengths to deliver on our merger objective of increasing the organisation's capacity to meet the needs of our beneficiaries; local children, young people and their families.

Young people remain at the heart of YMCA DownsLink Group. We continue to focus on the needs of young people who find themselves on the fringes of society. The Board has been particularly pleased with the way the organisation has continued to develop this mission through the purchase this year of the Worthing Foyer, continued growth of our Empty Homes programme and the establishment of our alternative education work.

I am pleased at the role YMCA DLG is taking in adopting the new, dynamic national YMCA brand. This has provided us with a modern interpretation of the Movement's Christian foundation with an inclusive vision statement and values that reflect our unique ethos.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff for their hard work over the past year and to recognise the important and wide ranging support we receive from our volunteers, supporters, partners and stakeholders. Our workforce is the organisation's most important asset and it has been exciting to embark on an innovative new training and development programme to improve our awareness of psychological trauma in childhood and adolescence; developing our staff to both understand the impact of trauma and work in a more trauma informed way.

In particular, I would like to record my sincere appreciation to David Standing who retires after 24 years service as Chief Executive. It is in large part due to David that the organisation is in such a good position today. We now look forward to a new era under our new Chief Executive, (previously Deputy Chief Executive) Chas Walker, who brings a wealth of experience and understanding of the organisation to his new role.

David Standing, CEO

We have an exciting and important vision for our organisation, as we work in our local communities helping children, young people and families to belong, contribute and thrive. Over the last decade we have consistently increased our reach and the impact our organisation has been able to make in delivering its mission and this year has been no exception.

As CEO I have been struck over recent months by the increasing need for our services even in the more affluent communities in which we work. We have never seen so many young people approach or be referred to our organisation in need of help. There has been national press coverage of increasing emotional and mental health issues amongst young people and we have seen this on a daily basis in our schools, community counselling and wellbeing services.

At a time when we are seeing unprecedented strain on public finances with difficult decisions being made at national and local government levels, I am concerned about the impact of these decisions and the adverse effect on the lives and opportunities for young people.

I am proud to be part of an organisation whose services are making a real difference to the lives of over 10,000

children, young people and their families this year. I am also proud to be part of the wider YMCA Movement in this country which is working at a national level to raise the awareness of the issues our young people face through campaigning and influencing government.

As I contemplate retirement it is with mixed emotion that I leave the YMCA and a job that I have loved. It has been a privilege to work with great people who share my passion to make a difference in young people's lives. I would like to thank staff, supporters, trustees, partner organisations and stakeholders for all the support they have given me and the YMCA in the past year and during my 24 years as CEO.



VISION AND VALUES

Our Vision

YMCA's vision is of an inclusive Christian movement transforming communities so that all young people can belong, contribute and thrive.

Our Values

- ▶ We seek out – we actively look for opportunities to make a transformative impact on young lives in the communities where we work, and believe that every person is of equal value
- ▶ We welcome – we offer people the space they need to feel secure, respected, heard and valued; and we always protect, trust, hope and persevere
- ▶ We inspire – we strive to inspire each person we meet to realise their full potential in all they do
- ▶ We speak out – we stand up for young people, speak out on issues that affect their lives, and help them to find confidence in their own voices
- ▶ We support others – we are committed to the wellbeing of the communities we serve and believe in the positive benefit of participation, locally and in the wider world



89%
resident
satisfaction
level

709 young people housed

counselling to over 7,000
children, young people and families

293
young people moved on
to independent living

2,500 young people received general
and housing advice at YAC

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

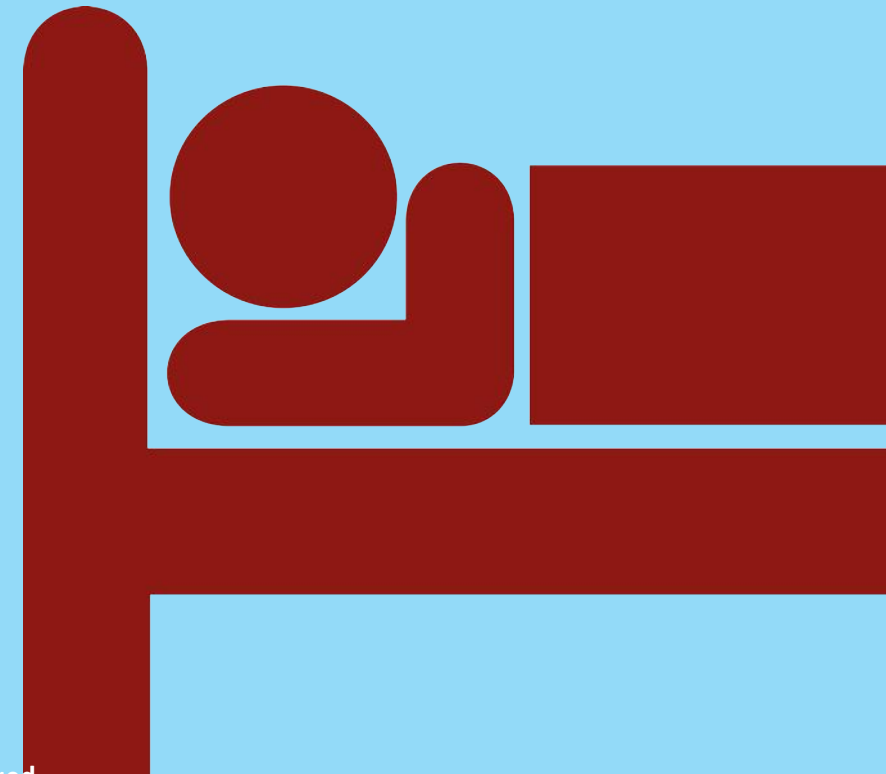
Our supported housing projects provide more than just accommodation. Dedicated staff provide support and advice through planned keywork, engagement and learning opportunities and multi-agency working. We strive to keep vulnerable young people from homelessness and support them on their journey towards independent living.

We do this by:

- ▶ Providing 548 units of accommodation across Sussex and Surrey
- ▶ Bringing a further 99 units of accommodation into management last year through our Empty Homes programme
- ▶ Supporting 293 young people with planned move on to independent living
- ▶ Working in partnership with Community Safety Teams, the police, health and social care services, and other charities, such as Night Stop (who provide short term emergency accommodation with trained volunteer hosts)
- ▶ Completing 97% of routine repairs on time through a specialist team of maintenance workers
- ▶ Achieving 89% resident satisfaction level in our 2014 survey

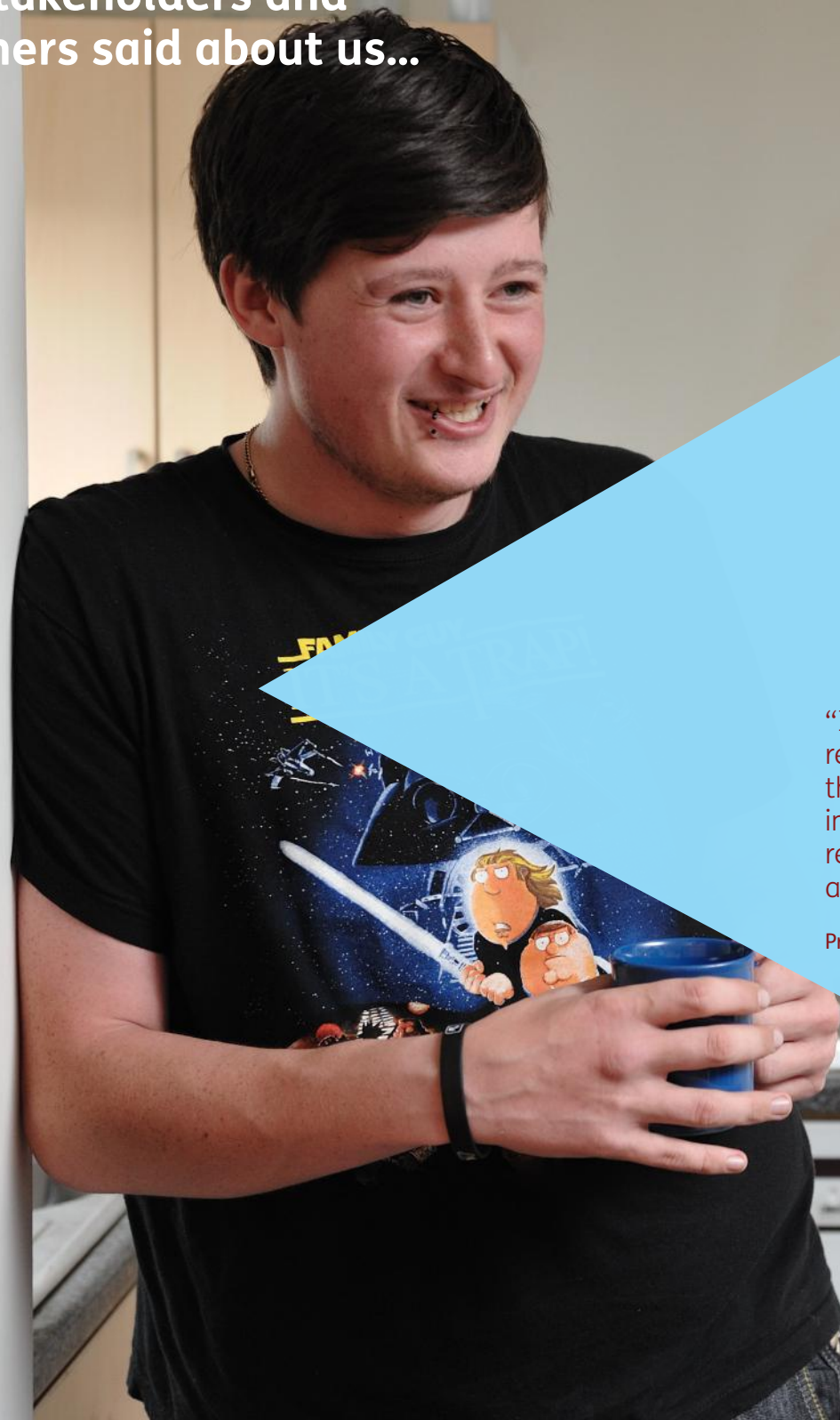
“I find the staff down to earth and approachable. The team all work really hard and have helped me to feel comfortable and safe, I really enjoy living here.”

Tony*, YMCA DLG resident



* Name has been changed

What our stakeholders and commissioners said about us...



“YMCA DLG’s Empty Homes scheme in Hastings has been an important part of a wider regeneration programme in the town. The partnership between the Borough Council’s Empty Homes Team and the YMCA has been very successful in targeting empty properties, making much needed investment and bringing them back into use for young people who might otherwise struggle to access appropriate accommodation.”

Andrew Palmer, Head of Housing and Planning Services, Hastings Borough Council

“I have had several clients reside at YMCA DownsLink Group, all of whom have reported it to be a supportive, accommodating environment. I have visited the organisation and have seen first-hand how well the staff and residents interact with each other. I have seen staff deliver key work sessions with residents; watched them motivate, encourage and challenge residents where appropriate; and deliver structured work such as goal setting.”

Probation Officer, Brighton & Hove

We believe that everyone should have someone they can trust and talk to.



Over 5,000 young people receive support and advice in Brighton & Hove and Sussex

We provide a wide range of services that are specifically targeted at young people who are at risk of harm or exploitation.

- ▶ Safe Space operates on Friday and Saturday nights in central Brighton to provide support and first aid for people intoxicated, distressed or injured on a night out
- ▶ WiSE (What is Sexual Exploitation) is passionate in its aim to prevent sexual exploitation of children and young people
- ▶ Our Youth Advice Centre (YAC) merged with our housing advice service to offer a single point of access for advice on housing, sexual health, money, benefits, mental health, etc
- ▶ Our Youth Homelessness Prevention Team supports young people who might become homeless and works with them and their parents to avoid this
- ▶ Reaching Your Potential works across Sussex to offer a wide variety of help and support to young people being released from custody

We adopt a partnership approach to our work, keeping young people at the centre. For example, our Safe Space project works with St John Ambulance, local nightclubs and the police; WiSE provides training through our Local Safeguarding Children's Boards to a wide variety of professionals.



“The support from YAC was excellent and I know that without it I wouldn’t be where I am today and been able to move on, because it was reassurance that I wasn’t alone and had someone to help me through that difficult journey.”

Raff, 18

Through our services we have:

- ▶ Helped 445 people through our late night city centre Safe Space project, preventing 57 ambulance call outs and 96 A&E admissions
- ▶ Supported and protected 51 young people who were experiencing exploitation through our WiSE project’s casework
- ▶ Trained 638 professionals to recognise and respond to signs of sexual exploitation
- ▶ Enabled over 5,000 young people to receive support and advice in Brighton & Hove and Sussex
- ▶ Supported 65 young people released from custody, through the Reaching Your Potential project

Photo posed by a model

We believe that people should have access to information and support to enable them to live healthier and happier lives.

Our counselling and therapeutic services, branded as Dialogue, are accredited by the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP). We seek to promote health and wellbeing in our communities by offering professional and confidential counselling in a safe, private space.

- ▶ We have counsellors in 74 schools across Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Surrey
- ▶ We offered over 12,000 counselling sessions throughout the year
- ▶ We delivered 17 workshops across schools, NHS and local authority settings to over 350 participants
- ▶ We have developed an online counselling service, called E-motion, aimed specifically at 13-25 year olds

“We have been working with Dialogue for over 14 years. Our young people have found the service invaluable, enabling them better to understand and cope with the world around them. The team members who work with the school do so as part of our community, trusted and valued. I have no hesitation in recommending Dialogue as a counselling service to support young people in any school setting.”

Headteacher, Secondary School, Brighton & Hove

“For so long you have offered me unwavering support, and I will always be grateful for that. No doubt you are the main reason I stayed calm and passed all my GCSEs with flying colours. Thank you so much again.”

Laura*, 15



* Name and photo have been changed

Right Here is a youth led emotional well-being project promoting good emotional and mental health among young people. They run group activities and adventure therapies for young people to build confidence and resilience.

Highlights from the past year include:

- ▶ Reaching 800 young people through mental health awareness campaigns
- ▶ A dog walk and talk initiative, with a focus on anxiety
- ▶ Developing a website, www.wheretogofor.co.uk, to improve access to mental health services
- ▶ Exploring the impact of social media on young people's mental health

“The two and a half years I volunteered for the campaigns and mental health promotions team of Right Here Brighton & Hove shaped me as a person. Being part of Right Here was a huge journey for me and helped me learn about, and be, myself. I think learning about mental health is just as important as learning about maths and English.”

Grace*, young volunteer, Right Here Brighton & Hove

* Name and photo have been changed



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

We invest in young lives and see the potential in young people to become valued members of the community by acquiring the skills they need to succeed. This area of our work is essential to our mission if young people are going to belong, contribute and thrive. We provide a range of services to our residents and the wider community in partnership with schools, partner organisations and local authorities.

- ▶ Our Engagement and Learning teams support the development of residents by delivering a flexible programme of accredited and non accredited learning activities
- ▶ Positive Placements recruit adult volunteers from the local community to be trained as mentors to support young people aged 16-25 towards a positive future
- ▶ Education is more than formal schooling and our Alternative Education programme is education in a different setting and style. We run accredited courses that cover a vast range of topics from childcare to bike building, that are for young people who struggle to stay in mainstream education



“It’s been absolutely great having a mentor. You know you’ve got someone next to you, supporting you and it’s not just you by yourself. It’s nice to have someone who wants to help because I don’t have much support. I know what I want but I can’t get it without someone guiding me. She guides me and I follow the path on my own.”

Jen*, Positive Placements

Through our services we have:

- ▶ Worked with partner organisations to help our residents achieve 245 accredited qualifications and awards
- ▶ Delivered a summer and autumn programme for the National Citizenship Scheme (NCS), completed by 75 young people
- ▶ Trained 12 adult mentors and supported 15 young people to move on to education, training or employment
- ▶ Enabled three residents to apply for and participate in an Operation Raleigh International trip to Borneo
- ▶ Supported a resident in playing for the women's England homeless football team at the Homeless World Cup in Amsterdam
- ▶ Worked with over 160 students through our Alternative Education programme. All students achieved AQAs in various skills

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

We offer a range of support to families including childcare services, before and after school activities, playschemes and youth clubs and activities. We also work to promote family cohesion and provide family mediation and counselling services.

- ▶ Our YMCA Steps Nursery in Lewes provides a caring, nurturing environment for 25 children aged 0-5 years. It is Ofsted registered and received a 'Good' rating
- ▶ YMCA Steps Out of School Clubs, registered with Ofsted, operate in Lewes and Horsham. During term time The Breakfast Club and After School Club run daily. During school holidays Playschemes are run offering children the chance to play, relax, create and make friends
- ▶ Dialogue Families Plus counselling enabled 170 families to receive help through 1,573 counselling sessions
- ▶ Relationship breakdown at home is the largest cause of homelessness for young people aged 14-16. Our Family Support Mediation service provided mediation to 30 families in order to prevent homelessness
- ▶ Out of our Y Centre in Hove we offer activities for under 5s through to over 50s. These include toddlers' gym, gymnastics, trampolining and fitness classes

“Since attending YMCA Steps Nursery we can see that our son has developed his social skills and has gained more confidence. He has learnt a lot through the creative activities and imaginative play you have provided him with over the year. Thank you all so much for looking after him.”

Ellie, Daniel's mum*



* Names and photo have been changed

Carolanne's story

Carolanne has been nominated for a national award, the YMCA Young Achiever of the year!

Carolanne was referred to YMCA DownsLink Group's Reaching Your Potential (RYP) project whilst she was serving a custodial sentence at HMP Bronzefield. Carolanne had a history of alcohol abuse and offending behaviour, had been out of education, training and employment for several years, had no accommodation and had broken family ties.

On release from custody, Carolanne made the decision to get as much help as possible and worked with RYP. Carolanne abstained from drinking alcohol and recognised the link between her previous alcohol abuse and offending behaviour. When she found out she was pregnant and had to leave her housing provider, she was homeless again. She was forced to move back to the area where she had committed her offences.

Carolanne stayed in a B&B, funded by RYP, but became very lonely and found her mental health issues worsened.

Carolanne was accepted into a mother and baby unit. She has now started a parenting course at college, has been volunteering in a charity shop and will be studying for her maths and English. She gave an inspirational talk to the female inmates at HMP Bronzefield, leaving both inmates and prison staff in tears. Carolanne is also involved in the Youth at Risk programme and may be able to get involved in the running of the programme in future.

Carolanne has done exceptionally well this year. Despite a traumatic childhood and a chaotic lifestyle, she has managed to make massive changes in her life. She recognises how far she has come, how difficult it has been, and now wants to be able to help other young people in her position and is thinking about a possible career in youth work.



Thank you!

It would not be possible for us to help local young people, children and families build brighter futures through our many services without support.

Thank you from all of us who work at YMCA DownsLink Group and thanks especially from the 10,000 people who accessed one of our services and whose lives were impacted by your contribution.

Thanks to our volunteers, trustees, charitable trusts and funders, partner agencies - statutory and voluntary, churches and individuals. Without you, we just wouldn't be able to do everything we do.

In the face of spending cuts and increasing levels of need we will have to increasingly rely upon generous partners and supporters.

We would like to thank our key partners for their support



Get Involved

DONATE to support our work. This can be a financial donation or giving practical items to our projects or YMCA shops. A donation can be made online at www.justgiving.com/YMCADownsLinkGroup or by texting YMCA00 £5 (or £10) to 70070.

TAKE PART in or organise a fundraising event. This could be a coffee morning or one of our organised events such as Tour de Y cycling or Sleep Easy.

VOLUNTEER with us. We have a wide range of projects and services that have opportunities for everyone who is interested in helping out.

If you would like to find out more about how you can help our young people, please contact our Communications team at communications@ymcadlg.org or visit our website at www.ymcadlg.org

A new chapter for YMCA DLG

David Standing has led YMCA DLG for almost 24 years and in September 2015 he retired as CEO and handed the role over to Chas Walker.

David has helped the organisation grow from a single site youth club in Hove to one of the largest YMCAs in the country. Over the years, he has seen three name changes and now YMCA DLG provide a home to over 500 young people in more than 12 separate projects over 3 counties.

David says, *“I have learned how important it is to value the people who work for the organisation, you have to be honest with your staff and be prepared to be vulnerable. It’s okay to let people know that you don’t have all the answers. I’ve also learned the importance of keeping a steady faith remembering that God is bigger than all the challenges and problems.”*



David Standing (left) and Chas Walker

“It’s been a privilege to have known and worked with David for so many years. He is well respected in the community for his total commitment to others in need and in particular the younger generation. His Christian faith shines out in all he does, with a determination to seek a better life for those in need, he has worked tirelessly for the betterment of others. His energy, passion and faith have always been an inspiration to us on the YMCA Board.”

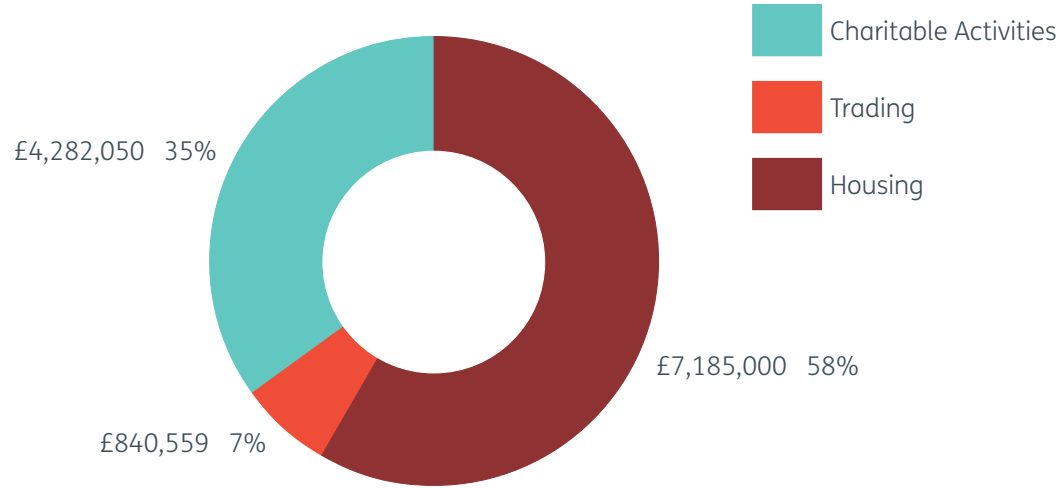
David Goldin, ex-Board member

“When David first became CEO, Hove YMCA, as it was then known, was at a low ebb. Under his leadership, vision and dedication it has grown to the organisation we know today. He has been prepared to take risks in growing the work and its effectiveness for the benefit of those it seeks to help and serve. A man of strong Christian faith who has sought to demonstrate this within the YMCA by his concern for those in need and ensuring prayer is a constant feature within the Association.”

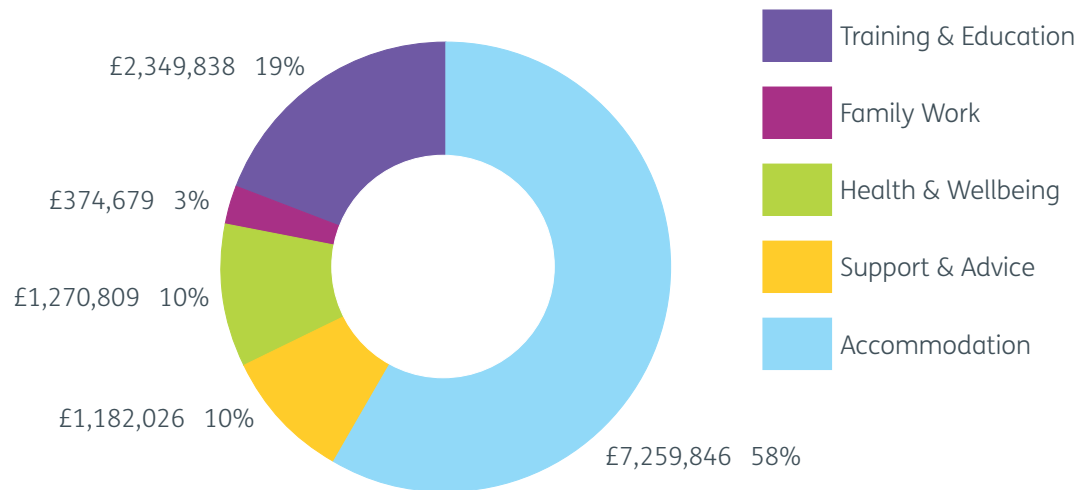
John Puttock, Board member

Finance

Income



Expenditure



Future plans

As we head into 2015-16 we will continue to invest in our core mission, as a youth organisation, and challenge ourselves to make our organisation more participative, ensuring young people can have influence from front line services through to governance. Young people and our Board of Trustees will create a Young People's Board, as part of our menu of involvement.

As we continue to see the impact of cuts in public spending on young people's services it only strengthens our resolve and the importance of our mission. Over the next 12 months we will focus on: increasing our housing stock with an emphasis on genuinely affordable rents that promote employment; increasing our capacity to support young people into work through vocational training, mentoring and apprenticeships; increasing our impact in promoting positive mental health in children, young people and families.

With this in mind it is an important point in time to take a fresh look at the organisation's strategic plan involving our beneficiaries, local communities, staff and stakeholders. This work will be delivered under our new mission statement, *youth minded community approach*, providing a modern expression of the YMCA. Key themes in our emerging strategy will be to increase community involvement in our organisation to seek alternative and innovative ways to fund our services, and develop a range of partnerships that increase the capacity and effectiveness of our work.

We will complete the final elements of our merger integration project to include simplification of our corporate structure, national brand implementation, review of our governance structures and the establishment of integrated financial systems.

We will continually seek to improve the impact of our work on the most marginalised young people in our society. We are committed to investing in our employees, ensuring they have the skills to take on this challenging work. This year we will extend the work of the organisation as being 'psychologically informed' to include developing our support mechanisms for staff and getting this important piece of work formally accredited.

Chas Walker, CEO



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