



YMCA



YMCA
DOWNSLINK GROUP

SNAPSHOT

(Summary of Annual Report)

2016





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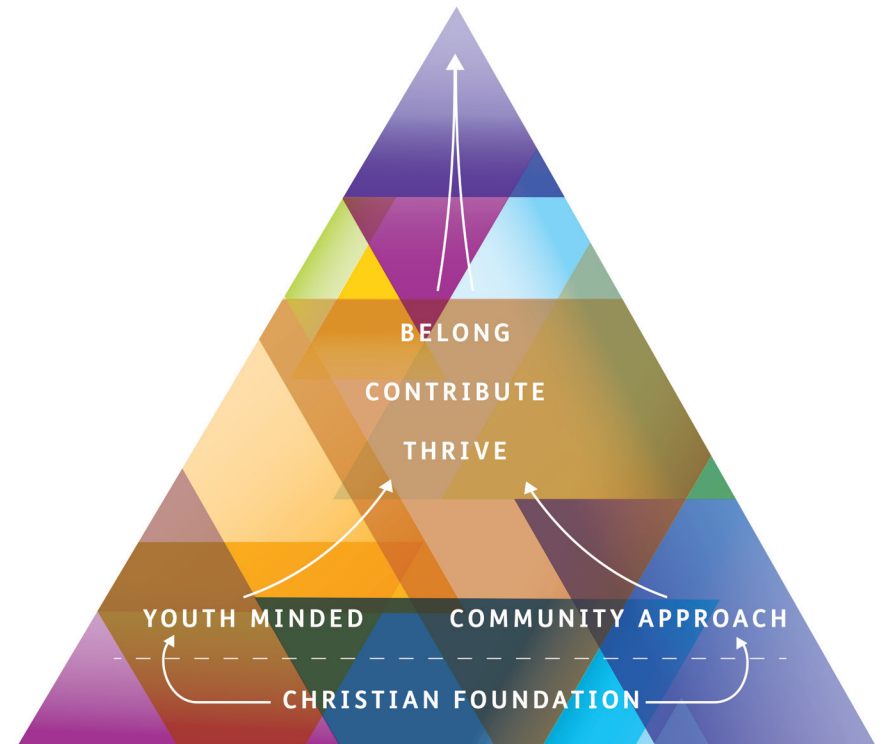
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OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose is to transform young lives so that all young people can belong, contribute and thrive.

We make a difference by providing a range of services to children, young people and families across Sussex and Surrey. Our work covers a wide range of areas including support & advice, accommodation, family work, health & wellbeing and training & education.

TRANSFORMING YOUNG LIVES



OUR IMPACT

In 2016 we reached over 15,000 children, young people and families through projects that run across our local communities. We provide the place and space for young people to feel safe through accommodation, training, learning, support and advice, counselling and mediation, so that they have better life chances and a positive future. Our services are delivered by over 400 dedicated staff and 150 volunteers.

544 units of
Accommodation



“The YMCA for me is my rock, my second chance. It has given me the opportunity to flourish in myself and with day to day life.”

Ben, 20

“YMCA Dialogue Counselling has helped me deal with my anger - making old friends new again. It has helped me to calm down when I have been upset and angry.”

Rita, 14

**Therapeutic
services to 7,000
young people**



**Support
and advice
to
5,000
young people**

“For me, YMCA YAC is a safe place to come and get advice on things I cannot share with family and friends. It helps me to know that I have somewhere to go to talk about certain issues that affect me and get the support and guidance I need.”

James, 21

“My mentor has been absolutely superb. I have a long term illness that affects my mobility, it has been valuable to have someone to talk to about it and being able to do what I want, which is to get into education. I have found Positive Placements extremely helpful and would recommend it to anyone.”

Dianne, 19

**Education &
vocational
services to**

**300
young people**



Chaplaincy

We have a number of YMCA volunteer chaplains who support young people and staff. In 2016 we recruited a Lead Chaplain, Lucy McGrath, to expand and develop the chaplaincy service and to build links with churches and faith groups. We hope in time to develop this service so that all young people and staff can access chaplaincy support.

“Chaplaincy provide a very warm and welcoming evening of vibrant conversation, hot drinks and doughnuts. It is a valuable opportunity for residents to meet and socialise in a safe friendly environment.”

Housing staff member





Photo: John with Em Foster, Young People's Board member

John Slater, YMCA DLG Chair of the Board of Trustees

It has been an exciting, productive and busy year for the organisation and on behalf of the Board of Trustees I am pleased to introduce the Snapshot of our annual report and accounts. As a group of volunteers, the Board of Trustees is motivated by the positive impact the work of the YMCA has on so many young lives.

What stood out for us this year was the significant increase in the organisation's reach, working with over 15,000 children and young people compared with 10,000 last year. What is even more impressive is the fact this was achieved with the same level of resources as last year. This is a testament to the commitment and hard work of our staff and volunteers and the amazing work they do.

As Chair of the Board of Trustees I recognise our responsibilities to plan for the future. We know there is an increasing need amongst young people for our support and help. I am pleased that we have been able to invest in an additional Director role this year to support the leadership of the organisation. I'm also pleased that we have launched our Young People's Board to ensure our plans for the future include the voice of our young people.

I am excited that new funding opportunities to support the organisation's work have been secured. We were selected for a significant county-wide community counselling contract in West Sussex and secured government funds to redevelop a housing project in Guildford that will improve and expand our offer to local young people.

It's great to be part of an organisation that is always finding new ways to invest in young lives, and 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 and stakeholders.

Photo: Chas (right) with YMCA East Surrey CEO Ian Burks during Coast 2 Coast Bike Ride

Chas Walker, YMCA DLG CEO

I write this introduction having just completed my first year in the role of CEO. Personally it has been a remarkable year leading such a dynamic organisation in its mission to transform young lives.

We are living in a time where confidence and respect for traditional public institutions, such as the government and church, is declining. Charities like the YMCA play a pivotal role in these changing times in bridging the gap between mainstream society and those on the margins. YMCA Positive Placements is a project that encapsulates that role by recruiting adult volunteers from the local community to be trained as mentors to support young people. It has been great to be able to extend the reach of YMCA Positive Placements into Surrey as a direct result of our largest fundraising event to date. Sleep Easy 2016 saw 60 people sleep out in three different locations and £21,000 was raised towards our work!

I recently attended our volunteer celebration event and it was a privilege to hear from our volunteers about the amazing work they do.



It reinforced to me that the most powerful solutions to social issues are local ones, where communities find harmony not difference and work towards a common good. Local communities are important partners in our work.

A big part of our year has been developing and launching our new strategy, defined in our 2020 Vision: *Youth Minded Community Approach*. Our strategy focuses on the important role we need to play in ensuring young people who find themselves on the margins of society are included and do not feel apart from but part of their local community. As some of our traditional public sector resources continue to reduce we will need to work even more closely with our local communities, finding new ways to develop and resource our work ensuring that all young people can belong, contribute and thrive.

ACCOMMODATION

In 2015/16 the performance of our supported housing services remained strong as we continued to provide safe accommodation and support to vulnerable young people in Sussex and Surrey.

We successfully integrated our supported and student housing provision in Guildford; secured funding in order to start work on the redevelopment of our Midway House supported housing project in Guildford and grew our housing stock through our Empty Homes programme.

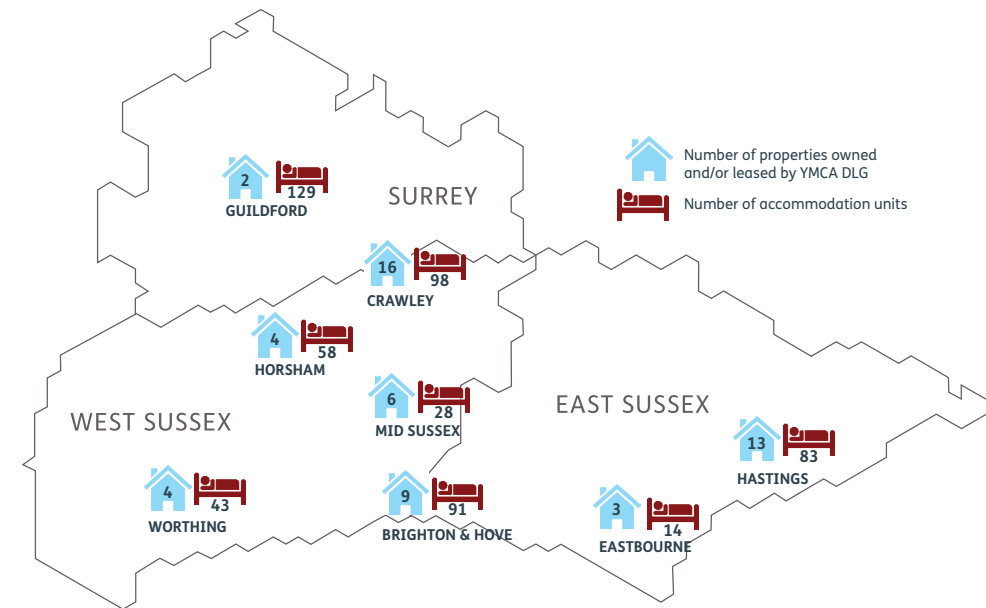
In 2015/16 we:



provided 794 young people with somewhere to live

- ▶ provided **670** young people with a housing support service that encouraged them towards independence
- ▶ helped **166** young people move on to independent living in a planned way
- ▶ provided a maintenance service with **95%** of repairs carried out within our target time scales
- ▶ invested **£21,000** of our charitable hardship fund in helping our residents overcome financial hardship and supporting them towards economic independence
- ▶ increased our housing stock by 12 units, making a total of **544** units of accommodation

Scope of our Supported Housing Operation



“I have been continually impressed by the level of support YMCA DLG staff provide to the young people they house. The staff are always approachable, helpful & committed to achieving the best outcome. I believe that the environment of support provided is of great benefit to the young people who use the service.”

Claire Peacock, Team Leader, Teen to Adult Personal Advisors (TAPA)



“If I hadn’t had a room at the YMCA then I don’t know where I would be today, probably lying dead in a gutter.”

BEN’S* STORY

Ben’s life was chaotic from an early age. But living at the YMCA brought stability and the opportunity to turn his life around.

“My childhood was unsettled by my parents’ stormy relationship resulting in their divorce. They had violent fights so I ran away when I was 14.

I stayed at random people’s houses and dealt drugs to make a living. I ended up taking the drugs myself to block out reality and became addicted to heroin.

Following a nervous breakdown I was sectioned for a while. When I came out of hospital I had nowhere to live and had a mental health problem with no support or medication.

I started sofa surfing and sleeping rough until thankfully I was able to move into the local YMCA. They gave me two meals a day and a comfortable room to stay in. I got valuable support from my own key worker and the rest of the Housing team. I was able to receive counselling from the YMCA counselling service.

I lived at the YMCA for about two years before moving on to live more independently at another YMCA property. I lived there for 18 months and was still able to access YMCA’s support. Then I was offered a house by the local council. I’m now finished with drugs and am working full-time.”

*Name and photo have been changed to protect the identity of the young person.

SUPPORT AND ADVICE

We provide a wide range of targeted advice and support services to young people across Sussex and Surrey.

YMCA YAC (Youth Advice Centre)

Single point of access for housing advice for young people in Brighton & Hove. YMCA YAC also runs general advice drop-ins to offer support on mental health issues, money, benefits, accessing jobs, sexual health and many other issues affecting young people.

5,000 young people accessed our advice and support services in Brighton & Hove and West Sussex



“The YMCA YAC Advice Worker really took time to understand my life and housing situation. She gave me very useful information tailored to my needs and was very considerate and kind.”

YMCA YAC Housing Advice client

YMCA WiSE project (What is Sexual Exploitation)

Raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and offer support to children and young people who are at risk or have suffered from CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation).



Our YMCA WiSE project trained over **1,250** professionals to **identify and respond** to the signs of child sexual exploitation

YMCA Safe Space

Operates on Friday and Saturday nights in central Brighton to provide support and first aid to people intoxicated, distressed or injured on a night out.



740 young people were supported through our YMCA Safe Space project preventing ambulance call outs and A&E admissions

“I came into YMCA Safe Space very distressed on Saturday night and a lovely member of the team really helped me after I lost all my friends and had no idea where I was. It’s amazing that there are projects like this to help vulnerable people out.”

YMCA Safe Space client

YMCA Reaching Your Potential (Lottery funded)

Works across Sussex to offer a wide variety of help and support to young people being released from custody.



YMCA Reaching Your Potential project helped **40** young offenders **adjust to life** after release from an institution

AMEER'S* STORY

Ameer came to the UK as an asylum seeker. His contact with YMCA started him on his journey towards building a new life.

Ameer, 24, arrived in Brighton as an asylum seeker from Sudan, having experienced imprisonment and torture. His route to Britain was fraught with difficulty and danger, and whilst being held in a detention centre he read about Brighton on the internet and fell in love with the city.


After arriving in Brighton, with no money and nowhere to go, Ameer was sleeping rough on a bench in Palmeira Square when someone advised him to go to the council and ask for support. The council referred Ameer to YMCA DownsLink Group's YMCA YAC service – the first point of access for housing advice if young people are under the age of 26.

The advice worker at YMCA YAC was able to offer Ameer a placement with Sussex Nightstop, a service that matches volunteer hosts with young homeless people on a night-to-night basis.

Whilst living with Nightstop hosts, Ameer attended YMCA YAC general advice drop-in for support on a range of issues. As he says himself, he felt safe with YAC knowing that if something happened they would offer support and advice.

Eventually YMCA YAC were able to offer Ameer a place in one of YMCA DLG's Empty Homes properties. Empty Homes is a scheme that brings empty properties back into use to provide affordable and safe accommodation to young people in housing need.

Ameer moved into his own room in a flat, sharing with four other young people. Now he has a safe base from which to build a new life in the UK. Ameer is looking for employment and has started an Access course as he wants to go to university and study business and IT.

A close-up portrait of a young man with short, curly dark hair and a light beard. He is wearing a dark, textured t-shirt and is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle smile. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an outdoor setting with a white van and a blue car.

“I feel safe knowing that if something happens YMCA YAC will offer support and advice.”

YMCA Dialogue

A counselling and therapeutic service that seeks to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people. YMCA Dialogue is accredited by The British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) and provides accessible counselling in community settings and schools across Sussex and Surrey.

In 2015/16 YMCA Dialogue provided
counselling to over 8,300
children and young people



In 2015/16 we:

- ▶ had counsellors in **74 schools** and **15 community settings** across Sussex, Brighton and Hove and West Surrey
- ▶ provided **17 workshops** to different professionals across schools, NHS and local authority settings
- ▶ grew our E-motion **online counselling** service for 13-25 year olds in Brighton & Hove providing accessible counselling to even more young people

“Thanks to counselling, we have seen a big change in our son’s confidence. He used to say he didn’t want to go to school but none of that is happening now. His relationships have improved. There has been an increase in confidence in his work. He has really turned a corner.”

Parent of a 13 year old who has benefited from YMCA Dialogue’s schools counselling service

YMCA Right Here

An innovative health and wellbeing project led by volunteers aged 16-25 and offering young people across Sussex the opportunity to get involved in a range of activities, from filmmaking to innovative research and consultation projects.

In 2015/16 we:

- ▶ grew the dog assisted group counselling programme ‘**Walk and Talk**’ in West Sussex
- ▶ piloted a school workshop about the **impact of social media** on young people’s mental health
- ▶ ran research projects focussing on: **young men and awareness of testicular cancer**, risks of smoking and sexual exploitation
- ▶ continued to enhance and promote our **national website, www.findgetgive.com**, designed to improve young people’s access to mental health services

YMCA Right Here volunteers delivered
emotional wellbeing workshops to over
1,000 young people



EMILY'S STORY

Emily first became involved with YMCA DownsLink Group in September 2015 when she joined a YMCA Right Here volunteer group. YMCA Right Here is a youth-led project based in Brighton and Hove that aims to promote and improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

“As a volunteer with YMCA Right Here I have been involved in developing relationships with local GPs. It has included visiting many GP surgeries around Brighton and Hove, and assessing how they could do better when it comes to mental health and young people. It’s been really interesting to see the differences between surgeries, and to talk to professionals about what they think their strengths and weaknesses are.”

“I’ve also been involved in designing our new social media and mental health workshop, which will be added to the workshops we’re currently delivering in schools; ‘5 ways to wellbeing’ and ‘coping with exam stress’. I’ve loved getting to talk to school students about mental health. It can be a challenging conversation, but one that is so important to have.”

“The thing I enjoy most about volunteering is our weekly meetings. Our coordinator, Jacob, and all the other volunteers are such a joy to work with, and seeing them is the best way to start the week. I must be one of only a few lucky people who really look forward to Mondays!”

“Mental health issues are real, valid, and should be nothing to be ashamed of! Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and kindness, and to be given the support they need. Speaking out about mental health issues is really important in order to get help, but that can be hard to do if you don’t know how the people around you will respond. That’s why it’s also really important to let your friends, family and colleagues know that they can talk to you. Hopefully when we start speaking about mental health issues more often, and honestly, less people will feel alone in their struggles, and more people will feel supported, and able to seek help.”

“Volunteering is a great way to make a positive difference. I would really encourage anyone who is passionate about mental health and young people to consider volunteering for YMCA Right Here! It’s an amazing opportunity to make change, meet friends, and gain skills.”



Photo: Emily (middle) with other YMCA Right Here volunteers

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

We invest in young lives and see the potential for young people to become valued members of the community by acquiring skills they need to succeed. This area of work is essential to our mission if young people are going to belong, contribute and thrive.

YMCA Alternative Education

Delivers a range of Alternative Educational programmes to young people across Sussex and Surrey who struggle to stay in mainstream education. Accredited courses cover a vast range of topics from Childcare to Horticulture and Barista Training to Bush Craft. They are delivered in a number of locations both on a 1-1 basis and in groups.



YMCA Alternative Education team saw a **99% achievement rate** for all learners

We provided Alternative Education programmes to **20 local schools**



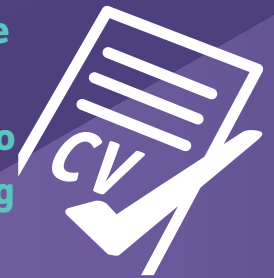
“I was really impressed by the students’ work and delighted to hear that they have every chance of achieving their LASER Award and Sports Leader Award. We have seen a real turnaround in the students’ behaviour since they started the course, so would like to say a massive thank you for helping them get back on track.”

YMCA Positive Placements

Trains adult volunteers as mentors to support young people towards a positive future. This involves working with a young person to improve their confidence, build essential life skills or write their CV to help them move on to education, training or employment.

This scheme operates across the majority of our housing projects and also works with young people from the local community.

YMCA Positive Placements scheme has a **60% success rate** of moving young people from NEET to employment, education or training



“It has been a challenge at times but I have always been supported. As a result of our work together my mentee has secured full-time employment with training in exactly the area he wanted to get into. His participation in the project has been beneficial to him but equally, this experience has been very rewarding for me.”

Positive Placements Mentor

LUCY'S* STORY

Lucy was struggling with homelessness and other issues – YMCA Positive Placements is making a difference.

Lucy was evicted from her family home after she told her parents that she was lesbian. After being thrown out of her home she presented as homeless to YMCA YAC where, following an assessment, staff were able to offer her a safe place to stay in YMCA DLG accommodation.


At this time Lucy faced a variety of challenges in her life. In addition to being ostracised by her family Lucy experienced homophobic abuse and was significantly affected by an undiagnosed mental health issue, alcohol misuse and prolific self-harming.

YMCA staff liaised with mental health and substance use services to ensure that Lucy received the support she needed. They also worked with Lucy to ensure she was safe and in a stable supported position from which she could begin to move forward in her life.

This package of support provided Lucy with a solid platform from which she could start considering her employment options. At this point she was referred to the YMCA DLG's Positive Placements project. Positive Placements matches a volunteer mentor with a young person who wants to be supported to identify and achieve the steps they need to take to access employment, education or training.

Lucy and her mentor Chris began meeting on a weekly basis. In the beginning their focus was on building trust and rapport and starting to explore the steps that Lucy could take towards employment. With the support from her mentor and YMCA DLG staff Lucy was referred to a 'return to work' course. She gained a work experience placement that has successfully led on to paid employment.

*Name and photo have been changed to protect the identity of the young person.



“It’s absolutely great having my 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.”

FAMILY WORK

We provided a range of services and support to local families including childcare, afterschool clubs and playschemes. We also offer counselling and mediation to promote cohesion and help families stay together.

In 2015/16 we:

- ▶ **gained successful Ofsted** inspections across all our childcare settings
- ▶ expanded our **Out of School Club** to collect from more schools doubling our intake and providing a new Breakfast Club for two local Primary schools
- ▶ provided **childcare apprenticeships** to local young people and **volunteering experience** to adults with special education needs

Our early years and out of school services provided care to more than

330 children



- ▶ offered support to over **430 Brighton and Hove parents** in over **2,000 consultations** through YMCA Dialogue Families Plus Counselling

Family Mediation

The largest cause of homelessness for young people aged 14-16 is relationship breakdown at home. Family Mediation is delivered from our YMCA YAC youth advice centre in central Brighton. It provides a preventative and supportive service aimed at reducing homelessness among young people by maintaining family relationships.



We provided mediation to over 30 families in order to prevent youth homelessness

“These sessions were great. My dad finally listened to what I had to say. That really helped and I feel much better about being at home now. The house is starting to feel like a family home again.”

Aron, 16



“Mediation has been helpful because I could talk about what is going on with my parents. I have been able to talk to my mum and work out how I truly feel about certain things and what I want to happen in the future.”

CHARLIE’S* STORY

Charlie’s violent behaviour led to his mum kicking him out of the family home. Family Mediation service at YMCA YAC helped them rebuild their relationship.

Charlie’s relationship with his mother was under strain following her separation from his dad. With his school attendance dropping and his use of recreational drugs increasing, it started to break down further until Charlie’s school referred him to the Family Mediation service at YMCA YAC. They were able to offer Charlie and his mum some space to talk things out and come up with ideas for how their situation might be different.

Initially a YMCA mediator met with Charlie’s mother. She was able to speak about her worries over Charlie’s angry outbursts and of her fears that he was turning out ‘like his dad’. This was concerning to all parties because there was a history of domestic abuse. She had literally locked Charlie out of her house until she saw what she called ‘a change in his behaviour’. With the help of the mediator she was able to draw up a draft document that listed what she felt needed to happen before she would let him back in to the house.

Later in the week the mediator met Charlie and talked to him about the meeting with mum and showed him the document. The mediator recorded Charlie’s reactions and added his ideas to the document. For Charlie it was crucial that trust was re-established before he could start rebuilding the relationship with his mum.

The following week the mediator, Charlie and his mum met on-site at school and were able to take it in turns to explore how each was feeling about the current situation. As well as being able to talk about their anger and frustration they also acknowledged their level of care for each other.

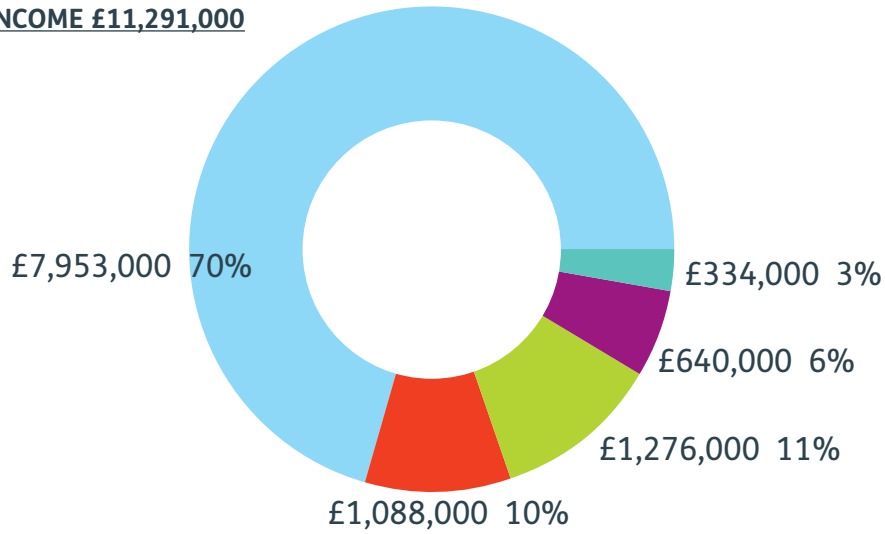
Over the course of the next four meetings they both contributed ideas to the setting of new boundaries, made compromises and agreed a plan that they were going to trial for the next three months.

By the end of that time Charlie had moved back to the family home, his school attendance improved, he had seen his GP to check up on his health and agreed to be referred into counselling.

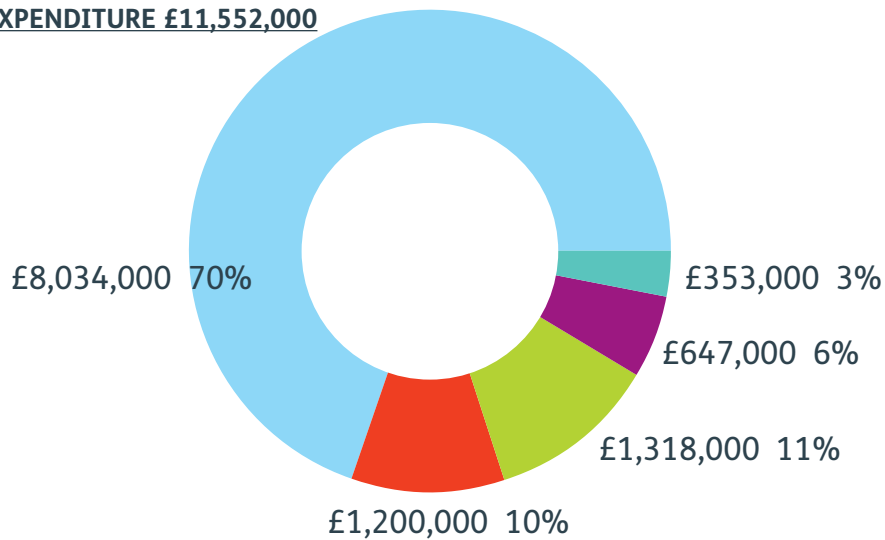
*Name and photo have been changed to protect the identity of the young person.

FINANCE

INCOME £11,291,000



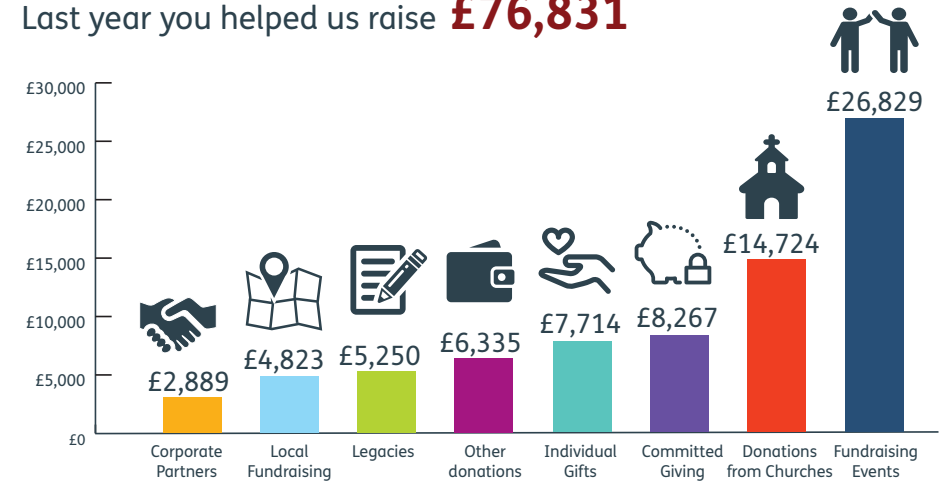
EXPENDITURE £11,552,000



FUNDRAISING

We would like to say a big 'THANK YOU' to all our supporters!

Last year you helped us raise **£76,831**



Sleep Easy

On 18th March 2016 we held our biggest fundraising event yet. 60 people slept out across three locations – Brighton, Horsham and Guildford.

On that one night we raised over **£21k!**

Our 2017 Sleep Easy promises to be even bigger so please email communications@ymcadlg.org if you would like to take part.



Support our work at www.ymcadlg.org/donate



THANK YOU

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

Thank you from all of us who work at YMCA Downslink Group and thanks especially from the 15,000 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 partnerships and generous supporters.

GET INVOLVED

DONATE to support our work. This can be a financial donation or via practical items given to support 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**. Regular donations are especially welcome as they allow us to plan for the future.

PARTNER with us to show your local community that as a company you care and invest in the young people around you.

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 with opportunities for everyone. Not only do you get to give back to your local community but you may also find it rewarding in ways you never imagined.

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/get-involved

YMCA DownsLink Group

Registered Charity No: 1079570

Reed House

47 Church Road

Hove

BN3 2BE

E reed.house@ymcadlg.org

T 01273 222550

W www.ymcadlg.org

Twitter.com/ymcadlg

Facebook.com/ymcadlg

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SUPPORT & ADVICE

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