

YMCA



Impact Report 2020-2021

YMCA CREWE

2020: An Unprecedented Year

Throughout its history, the YMCA movement has been extremely resilient in its response to unforeseen disasters, and 2020 has been no different.

At YMCA Crewe, we were forced to close some of our services in line with government lockdown restrictions. However, this did not stop us from reaching people in the community. We adapted our engagement sessions at Gresty Road and started to deliver some new areas of work in direct response to the pandemic through our Communities department. We refurbished our GLO Café, making it a better training facility for our service users and volunteers. We were also commissioned to deliver a new contract for Cheshire East Council working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and care leavers.

Although 2020-2021 was a difficult and challenging year, we have further strengthened our understanding that there is always a way to help change somebody's life for the better.



Keele Interns

From July 2020 to April 2021, we had **four virtual internships** in our Communications department, for students from **Keele University**. The internships provided a vital opportunity for young people to gain practical work experience while working from home during the pandemic.

The interns were responsible for a range of tasks, including analysing our social media communications, generating new social media content, and creating a short documentary about the impact of Covid-19 on our staff and service users. We were awarded Keele University's Social Inclusion Award for this work.

Two of our interns have progressed into full time employment, and two are still in education.

Artwork by 2020 intern, Pryanka.



Abasiama filming her documentary, 'The Impact', 2020

GLO Café

In **October 2020**, we were successful in securing funding from **Homeless Link** and the **National Lottery** to start a new placements scheme for our service users and volunteers. This included a small scale refurbishment of our **GLO Café**, which is now open to the public and acts as a training venue.



Between October 2020 and March 2021, **five** of our service users and volunteers took part in the six-week GLO Café placement, within the lockdown restrictions. This was a huge win for our Engagement team. Each of these individuals improved their employability, health and wellbeing, mental health, and self-confidence.

In 2021-2022, we plan to use the GLO Café increasingly as a community asset, providing space for other local businesses to meet and host events. We are planning an art exhibition for late 2021 and we are excited to develop this area of our work further.



Properties Maintenance Service



As well as the GLO Café placement, we started a new **Properties and Maintenance Service**. This acts as both a training experience for our service users and a **social enterprise** refurbishing and maintaining properties for local letting agents.

The Properties Maintenance Service placement runs as a next step for individuals who take part in the **Hard As Nailz** engagement sessions and want to take that further. Alongside this, participants can undertake a CSCS card qualification, which readies them for work.

The team have done a great job getting this service off the ground and they have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from clients. We are excited to watch as this new service continues to flourish over the coming year.

Gresty Road

Our Gresty Road services faced a great many challenges throughout 2020. Our engagement programmes were halted by restrictions. Our residents felt the impact of social isolation. The regular routine of life at Gresty Road disappeared; no breakfast club, no games lounge, shared kitchens limited to single capacity. However, in spite of all these difficulties, our staff and residents found ways to bring some life into the place.

The courtyard, which is overlooked by a majority of the rooms in the building, became an engagement platform early in the pandemic. Residents participated in **karaoke, quizzes, and exercise classes**, all from the safety of their rooms. Some people found an energy in **gardening**, improving the outdoor spaces at Gresty Road immensely. Each day, one staff member and one resident provided **a meal to every room in the building** through a 'meals on wheels' model. A resident was successful in securing a place on a paramedic training course and applied to the **GLO Bank** to purchase a laptop for his studies. Twelve residents took part in the YMCA Crewe Virtual Marathon. We began a rolling programme of refurbishment for the rooms at Gresty Road.

We are incredibly proud of the resilience of our staff and residents and are grateful for all they did to get through the pandemic.



Gresty Road

In a year where health became the focus of our conversations, we introduced a new set of hygiene measures for cleaning and disinfecting our building. Beyond that, we provided free eye tests for all of our residents and ensured glasses were provided for those who needed them, and we improved the WiFi in Gresty Road to enable our residents to keep in touch with family, friends, professionals, and their education.



95%
Feel
Supported by
Staff

76
Moved
In

95%
Feel
Safe at YMCA
Crewe

86%
Feel able
to use their
Voice

79%
Positive
Move-On

84
Moved
Out

83%
Feel Supported
towards Career
Progression

80%
Personal
Development

84%
Improved
Health and
Wellbeing

21
Became
Employed

Young People's Service

It was a successful year for our work with young people aged 16 and over. Our **Ignition, Bridges, Starting Point and Foyer Plus** services all merged into one **Young People's Service**. This was the result of our successful application to Cheshire East Council for the new Housing Related Support 16+ contract, which we began to deliver in January 2021. This contract includes working with **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Care Leavers**, and we will be building five new rooms at Gresty Road specifically for this service.

Of all asylum seekers who engaged with YMCA services across England and Wales in 2020, 1 in 10 were supported by YMCA Crewe.



The young people on this service began a **weekly football session** with other asylum seekers and refugees in the county, and have been included in designing and planning the new apartments at Gresty Road. Every young person who moves into a YMCA Crewe property on this service has the opportunity to furnish and decorate it themselves, so it really feels like a home.



Young People's Service

In addition to the new apartments at Gresty Road, we have taken on **additional properties** in the community for this service, all of which are being freshly refurbished and brought up to a high standard and quality.

Through this service, we have seen young people with no spoken English **learn to converse in a new language**, take part in our GLO Café placements, and make new friends. We are excited to see what new opportunities lie ahead for the young people on this service as we watch them grow, flourish, and find a place for themselves.

19
Moved
In

20
Moved
Out

95%
Positive
Move-On



Resident Story

B was evicted from her social tenancy due to numerous incidents of anti-social behaviour. Following a very difficult few months through her eviction and the COVID pandemic, her mental health and confidence in her own abilities were severely affected. Due to the evictions and issues from previous stays at supported accommodation projects, B had no options available to her from the previous stays. We had a prior relationship with B from her short stay at the YMCA and agreed that she should be given a chance in an Ignition property.

Young people living at the YMCA are encouraged to take ownership of their accommodation from the outset. B embraced the opportunity to decorate her Ignition flat, choosing some flamboyant wallpaper and paint colours. She really thought about what she wanted from a practical point of view as well. B admitted that she can be quite accident prone so she chose easy to clean vinyl flooring instead of carpets.

B is now almost 6 months into the Ignition tenancy and has been doing extremely well. Her flat is always in a good condition and she has managed to keep up with the challenge of budgeting her money. She continues to work on her relationships with her friends and engages very well with the support that she is being provided with. Although it didn't work out in the end, B gained employment with a local business which is a huge step in the right direction for her, demonstrating that her confidence is constantly improving. There have been no warnings issued and B continues to work on her gatekeeping and ASB issues which has improved massively.

It was a relief for B that she was offered an Ignition flat and she was really happy when she saw the property decorated in what she had chosen. When we asked what she liked most about it she replied 'what's not to love about it?!



Communities

It has been an extremely challenging time for our communities and the impact of lockdown has resulted in mass isolation, depression and a rise in unemployment and poverty.

Forty-two families have received phone calls, texts, group messages, and guidance throughout the pandemic.



42
families
supported

£2,250
per week for
food parcels

5
new
volunteers

Between lockdowns, we provided **outdoor services for children and families**, which were well attended until the weather got the better of us. Lockdown was incredibly difficult throughout the winter months and many commented that **without our contact, their struggle would have been far worse**.

Information about **free Wi-Fi** available to help home school their children and **contributions to electricity bills** was sent to all of our families, as many of them were entitled to apply for this. Each family also received **Christmas hampers and vouchers, half-term packs, hot water bottles, Easter eggs and three food parcels**, delivered every two weeks to the value of £25 each.

We also launched a new **voluntary telephone befriending** service. This service provides a lifeline for extremely lonely and isolated, older people who live on their own. Currently, we have **five trained volunteers** and six individuals referred to this service.

Communities

Schools have been back in touch and we plan to begin delivering our family groups again in late springtime 2021. We are working hard to organise indoor community services as and when new guidelines allow us to do this. The team are delighted to be moving forward at last.

The voluntary sector looks to be developing strongly this year within YMCA Crewe and this will inevitably enhance the impact of our services throughout all of our departments. We have begun a volunteer drive, drawing on new people to help increase our offer further, and we will continue to do this into 2021-2022.

We hope that the road map back to normality will enable both our work in the community and with new volunteers to move slowly in the right direction thereafter.

Tracey Bentley

Communities and Volunteer Team Leader



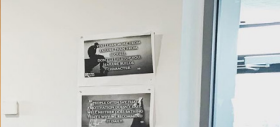
Wrap-Up

We are extremely grateful for the resilience our staff team, service users, and volunteers have shown throughout this difficult year. In addition to all the great work already mentioned in this report, we also:

- Held a virtual marathon, which people cycled, ran, or walked, either on their own or as part of a team
- Built a new allotment at YMCA Crewe with some of our residents
- Began a new gardening project at an allotment in Crewe, which allowed some of our service users to put the skills they had been learning in Hard as Nailz sessions into practice
- Introduced more flexible working arrangements for staff, including shorter work days to reduce the contact between staff teams
- Encouraged staff to undertake additional training they would normally not have had time to, including fundraising, mental health, team leading, and social return on investment courses
- Decorated our vans to make them a more visible presence in the community

We are also incredibly thankful to the organisations that provided fast, accessible funding to improve our capacity and ability to respond to the pandemic. This includes the Cheshire Community Foundation, Steve Morgan Foundation, Crewe Town Council, Homeless Link, the National Lottery, and Crisis. Additionally, our current funders were extremely understanding and flexible in their response, particularly the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Children in Need.







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