

Aims and Purposes

YMCAs in England share a common statement of Aims and Purposes:

The YMCA is a Christian movement which seeks to unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom.

It welcomes into its fellowship persons of all religious faiths and of none.

In accordance with its Christian values the YMCA Stands For

- A worldwide fellowship based on the equal value of all persons.
- Respect and freedom for all, tolerance and understanding between people of different opinions.
- Active concern for the needs of the community.
- United effort by Christians of different traditions.

As the expression of its Christian purposes the YMCA Aims To

- Provide a welcome to its members for themselves in a meeting place which is theirs to share, where friendships can be made and counsel sought.
- Develop activities which stimulate and challenge members in an environment that enables them to take responsibility to find a sense of achievement.
- Involve all members in the care and work for others.
- Create opportunities for exchanging views so that members can improve their understanding of the world, of themselves and of one another.

YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create inclusive and energising communities where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Vision and Values

Our ethos describes how we go about our work; the essence, culture and values that distinguish YMCA and define who we are. It captures the principles that guide us and is the promise we make to everyone whose life we touch.



In the spirit of our Christian faith and with a youth minded community approach

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 nurture their body, mind and spirit, and 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 voice.

We serve 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.

History and Structure of the YMCA

The YMCA is one of the largest youth development charities in the world, working in over 120 countries with 30 million people.

Although the YMCA has changed considerably since it was founded in 1844, our guiding principles remain the same.

Each YMCA in England affiliates to the National Council of YMCAs – commonly known as YMCA England. Together, we are a member of YMCA Europe which in turn affiliates to the World Alliance of YMCAs.

There are over 110 YMCAs in England, operating in almost every area of the country. Each YMCA is an independent registered charity. Some, as we are in Doncaster, are also registered providers of social housing.

There's also the National Council of YMCAs – commonly known as YMCA England – whose primary role is to support YMCAs and to represent them at a national and international level.

1844 George Williams formed the first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in St Paul's churchyard in the heart of London.

1851 In the first few years after its founding, the Young Men's Christian Association focused on creating opportunities for fellowship, education and mutual support for young male Christians, especially those who had moved from their homes to take up work in the towns and cities of England during the industrial revolution.

But after exhibiting at the Great Exhibition of 1851 the YMCA grew rapidly to become a worldwide movement and the range and scope of our work broadened to include women and men of all ages. The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London proved to be a milestone in the YMCA's history as publicity leaflets distributed at the time helped to develop links with other countries.

These days, the YMCA strives to be an inclusive Christian organisation, open to men and women of all faiths and of none.

1851 The American YMCA Movement was founded in 1851, leading the way in addressing physical fitness with gym openings and a wide programme of activities.

It went on to invent both basketball (1891) and volleyball (1895).

1888 London Central YMCA opens a large gym, making a shift towards personal health and fitness.

1894 The YMCA had become so significant that its 50th anniversary was marked with George Williams receiving a knighthood from Queen Victoria and the Freedom of the City of London. Sir George died in 1905 and was laid to rest in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

1914 During World War I, the YMCA extended its work across the channel to support the troops. YMCA huts provided soldiers with food, drink and free writing paper and envelopes.

1932 The YMCA launched two initiatives to help tackle rising unemployment: British Boys for British Farms, which placed unemployed young men as agricultural workers on farms, and an Employment Department, which found jobs for 38,000 ex-servicemen.

- 1945** The YMCA continued its war work and mobile canteens were introduced to bring refreshments to the troops.
- 1959** A government report was published on the need for better leisure facilities for teenagers.
- As a result, many YMCAs began youth clubs to help young people with their personal development through recreation, leisure and informal education.
- 1970** The YMCA George Williams College was established to provide professional training for youth workers. It remains today one of the leading training colleges for those working in informal education.
- 1980** YMCA Training for Life was launched which would result in the creation of YMCA Training, one of the UK's leading vocational training organisations.
- 1994** The YMCA began work in prisons and young offenders institutions.
- 2005** The 150th Anniversary of the World Alliance of YMCAs, culminating in a global event in Mumbai, India, on the theme of "Celebrating, envisioning and building peace with justice."
- 2006** National Assembly of YMCAs in England agrees that the Vision for the Movement will be "The YMCA's vision is for an inclusive Christian Movement, transforming communities so that all young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive."