



Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

YMCA WIRRAL

Impact Report | 2022



24 and the clock
pr Wirral



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AWARENI
HUB:
9am - 5p

Foreword by Andy Topping

I feel very proud to be able to write this introduction to YMCA Wirral's 2022 Impact report.

I first arrived at YMCA Wirral over ten years ago, at a time when I was an alcoholic and was also dabbling in heavier illicit substances, and this was not because I enjoyed it (feeling out of control and having a buzz) or the fact that I was doing this to my body to feel part of the group or to be accepted. The truth is that I had leaned on these substances and used them as a crutch to get me through my messed-up childhood and the fact that by then, I was in my 30's and had used them for so long, I was totally addicted. Was I happy? If you want the honest truth, I hated it. I hated waking up every morning with that dread and panic of where I was going to get my alcohol and drugs from that day just to make me feel normal like every other person who I would see going about their daily business like going to work and taking their kids to school or even coming out of ASDA with their wife and two kids all screaming at the same time trying to get their voice heard over everybody else's - deep down as I saw these people I was envious and I wanted a life like that.

I remained stuck in my addiction for the next few years and every day turned out to be the same nightmare that I had put to rest when I had passed out the previous evening under the influence and now, I had to do it all again whilst in my head I wanted the normality that everybody else had around me so the question was how can I get it and bear in mind this is not something that I could steal or that someone else could provide me and I quickly realised that I had to do this one for myself.

For me, the first big step in working towards my dream was to tell my key-worker at the YMCA (who I had ignored for the last few years because in my head no one could help me). I wasn't sure they would believe me or feel my determination to break free of this living hell I was enduring. But how wrong was I, as the support staff immediately helped me develop the plans I had inside my head (That I now know and understand and the term "Plan" was actually a support plan). They explained that this plan would be my map – a guide with milestones of the journey to get from one place to another heading towards my chosen destination and most importantly how they could work with me and help me get there.

I won't deny it was not a difficult journey, but some-how I summoned up the determination and battled through the many physical and mental barriers to keep moving forward and prove that I really wanted this, and finally I got my funding approved for rehab in 2017 and I jumped at it with everything I had.

Yes, it was hard and I mean very hard, with the night sweats and the sickness and of course there were times that I nearly gave up, however, deep down I knew giving up was not an option and so after ten long months in Phoenix Futures rehab facility on the Wirral, I was discharged substance free, my body healed, feeling healthier and fitter and so clear minded, for what I can honestly say was the first time in my adult life.

Now I had all this free time on my hands and all my personal knowledge and lived experiences of addiction – knowledge that I could never have learnt in any classroom or from reading any book and I knew exactly what I wanted to do with it, so I turned to the place where my recovery journey began and that place was YMCA Wirral.

It's difficult to express the emotions I felt when I turned up to where it started and the gratitude and love that I had for this wonderful place – it really was overwhelming but my elation was tinged with sadness for the other people who remained stuck in the chaotic lifestyle that I had luckily left behind me. I asked if I could become a volunteer, met with the volunteer co-ordinator and the management team who all agreed, I could start volunteering.

It has now been five and a half years since I returned to YMCA Wirral, after they gave me my life back and I am pleased I worked hard in my volunteering and today I am so proud to say that I am now employed as a fully qualified Multi Skilled Support Worker, working as part of the same team that helped me and the future has never looked so good. I have a hugely meaningful job, my health and happiness and above all else, I have rebuilt my broken relationship with my family and I now play an active part in my grandchildren's lives.

Thank you YMCA Wirral – it is a real honour to be asked to write this foreword of the work of our amazing YMCA!





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and 1 female used it
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YMCA Wirral's biggest achievement over recent years has been our ability to rise to unprecedented challenges, flex our resources and mobilise ourselves to support the communities of Wirral, when and where it is most needed. The post-pandemic era, has seen new challenges that we never thought we would ever face and social hardships for some, almost unimaginable in 2022/2023.

At a senior management level, a huge amount of time has been taken up, identifying ways to offer effective local solutions to homelessness, poverty and social inequality, while balancing continuity of service. Looking back over the last twelve months, I am extremely proud of what the YMCA Wirral team has been able to achieve for the people we support and the wider communities of Wirral.

In closing this message, I would also like to express my thanks to the many unseen friends and community hero's who behind the scenes support our work.

Nigel Hughes
Chief Executive YMCA Wirral

What we do

At YMCA Wirral people are at the heart of who we are and what we do. Day-by-day, person-to-person, we tailor what we offer to what people need.

We're here to provide consistent, friendly and informed support and accommodation services so people can explore options and take the next steps towards a happier, safer future.

We provide information, advice, person centred support, accommodation & homes to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

We meet people where they're at. We walk alongside them. We listen. We offer hope. We never judge or give up.

We strive to provide a safe place where support can be offered so that people can make choices, explore options and take the next step towards a positive future.



Dr Katie Gregson GP and Nurse Practitioner Kerry Greenop hold two on-site surgeries every week of the year.



Jamie & Rex's story

YMCA Wirral and Magenta Living make
someone's new year dreams come true!

Fact: Homeless people would rather sleep on the streets with their pets than go into accommodation without them.

For homeless people, the streets can be a scary and very lonely place where no-one seems to care about you. Life out on the streets can be a harsh and cruel existence. Many people treat street homeless people like they are invisible – or sometimes worse. Homelessness can be a deeply isolating experience – and people who are homeless often do not have the support and love of a caring family or friends around them. Often, days and weeks go by without anyone acknowledging them, or showing them simple acts of kindness, that eventually erodes their self-belief and self-worth.

A pet can be the one thing that gives them the courage to face each day. Their furry friend is often the only other creature in the world who seems to treat them with unconditional love. They are a lifeline for their owner and a source of comfort, strength, and love for some-one struggling to cope with life's challenges.

Pet ownership among homeless people is common and has been linked with a range of health and social benefits, including alleviating loneliness, isolation and depression and a reduction in suicidal thoughts, substance abuse and criminal activity.

In such a vulnerable situation as homelessness, the bond between people and their dogs helps them to cope with everyday problems and difficulties. In research and in various Animal-Assisted Therapy programmes, it has been found that the bond with dogs brings emotional, cognitive and social benefits to a wide range of groups. In situations of vulnerability, social exclusion, gender violence and social problems, an individual's bond with their pet is highly beneficial.

Jamie first became known to staff at YMCA Wirral in September 2019 when he was identified by the YMCA Wirral Rough Sleeper Initiative team sleeping in a tent with his dog Rex, hidden away from the general public behind some bins, at the rear of a Retail Shopping Park.

For most of Jamie's adult life he has experienced struggles with drug addiction which ultimately resulted in him becoming home-less with his



much loved dog and as such he could not find anywhere where he could get accommodation because of him having a dog. For Jamie like many others, being separated from his dog was not an option. Jamie slept rough in his tent for five months before he was picked up by the YMCA team and was overjoyed that the YMCA were willing to support both him and his dog together, so he could get access to the support that he needed without them both being separated.

Once Jamie had some safe warm accommodation for him and Rex, he was able to access services that he could not previously because of

being no fixed abode – for example a dentist, GP and linking into drug and mental health services.

Jamie has worked hard over the last two and a half years, building up his confidence and gaining the skills that he now has to live independently within the local community drug free.

With the extensive help of the dedicated support team at YMCA Wirral and with his own perseverance, Jamie has now signed a tenancy with local Housing Provider Magenta Living and is looking forward to achieving his long-term goal of making a forever home, for him and Rex.

Staff reflections

Why I work for YMCA Wirral

Building relationships

"I couldn't ask for a better opportunity to fulfil my passion to help and support those who need it and to help people back into the community."

Annie Johnson

Multi-Skilled Support Worker



Making positive changes

"My job means a lot to me because of its challenges, and find it very rewarding when we see the positive changes in the clients we support at YMCA Wirral – it's a great place to work and be part of the positive things that happen."

Nicaise Koffi

Multi-Skilled Support Worker



Saving lives

"Through embedding harm reduction across the organisation, we meet people where they are at, without judgement, promote people's rights and save lives. Every day".

Anne-Marie Lowe

Senior Specialist Team Lead – Substance Misuse



Achievements | 2022

These are some of the many achievements your local YMCA has accomplished during 2022

Our **Emergency Night Triage Beds** provided **bed night spaces** to a total of **204 individuals**:



62
female



142
male



Controlled Drinking Environment



1,954 dependent individual visits
17 total referrals to CGL
64 supported appointment attendance:
doctors, hospital and other appointments

101 hostel clients moved in:



28
female



73
male



16 presenting alcohol issues
70 presenting substance misuse issues
15 presenting mental health issues



101
hostel clients
moved on:

9 back to family
or friends

7 abandoned

22 evicted

48 housed

3 sheltered
housing

4 detox/rehab

2 nursing home

6 moved back
to out of area

In 2022 Dr and Nurse have had 593 contacts (drop in sessions) with clients in the YMCA (including triage and SWEP).

Our hostel nurse and GP completed:

78 Covid-19 vaccines

41 vaccines (B12, Influenza, Hepatitis A/B and BBV testing

40 routine bloods (including LFTs)

31 new GP registrations

19 sexual health interventions

62 harm reduction/injecting assessments

159 wound assessment and care

18 Hepatitis C referrals/support/medication

39 referrals into structured treatment (drugs/alcohol)

69 liase with GP surgeries/mental health specialist



Our Rough Sleep Initiative engaged 146 individuals:



40
female



106
male



103 placed into supported housing

8 into their own private tenancies

6 connected back to their local authority

5 temporarily placed into B&B and/or hotels

32 Street Link referrals

4 entrenched rough sleepers engaged and were reaccommodated

89 used YMCA triage/emergency overnight accommodation and then were rehoused

11 referrals made to CPN/Mental Health Team

5 Housing First referrals made and accepted

5 went to detox/rehabilitation

1 was placed into women's refuge

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Charity Reference Number: 1000601
Company Registration Number: 2534811



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

FAMILY & YOUTH WORK

HEALTH & WELLBING

HOUSING

TRAINING & EDUCATION

SUPPORT & ADVICE