

YMCA

THAMES GATEWAY GROUP

SERVING COMMUNITIES IN ESSEX, KENT & LONDON



MAKING AN  
**IMPACT**  
— DURING A —  
**PANDEMIC**

- ▶ Support & Advice
- ▶ Accommodation
- ▶ Family Work
- ▶ Health & Wellbeing
- ▶ Training & Education



# Introduction

**Since last year's Impact Report, the world has been turned upside down, thanks to the coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 swept across the world and has tested humanity. Businesses have struggled, including us, but we're delighted to say we're still here. Our history shows that we have adapted and thrived, supporting people when they need it most – and this past year is no different.**

The YMCA has been in existence since 1844 when, George Williams, together with his friends, organised the first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Originally set up as a safe space for young men to carry out Bible study and prayer, away from the streets of London, the YMCA today supports more than 65 million people across 120 countries. Regardless of gender, race, age, sexual orientation or socio-economic background, 177 years later YMCA is still here for those that need a little bit of help.

Our Association, YMCA Thames Gateway Group, has been in existence for 115 years, supporting the residents of Essex, Kent and London – and we plan on still being here in another 115 years. After all, we're here for good.



### Multi-use branch

- 1 YMCA Dartford
- 3 YMCA Romford
- 11 YMCA Woolwich
- 18 YMCA West Kent

### Youth Centre

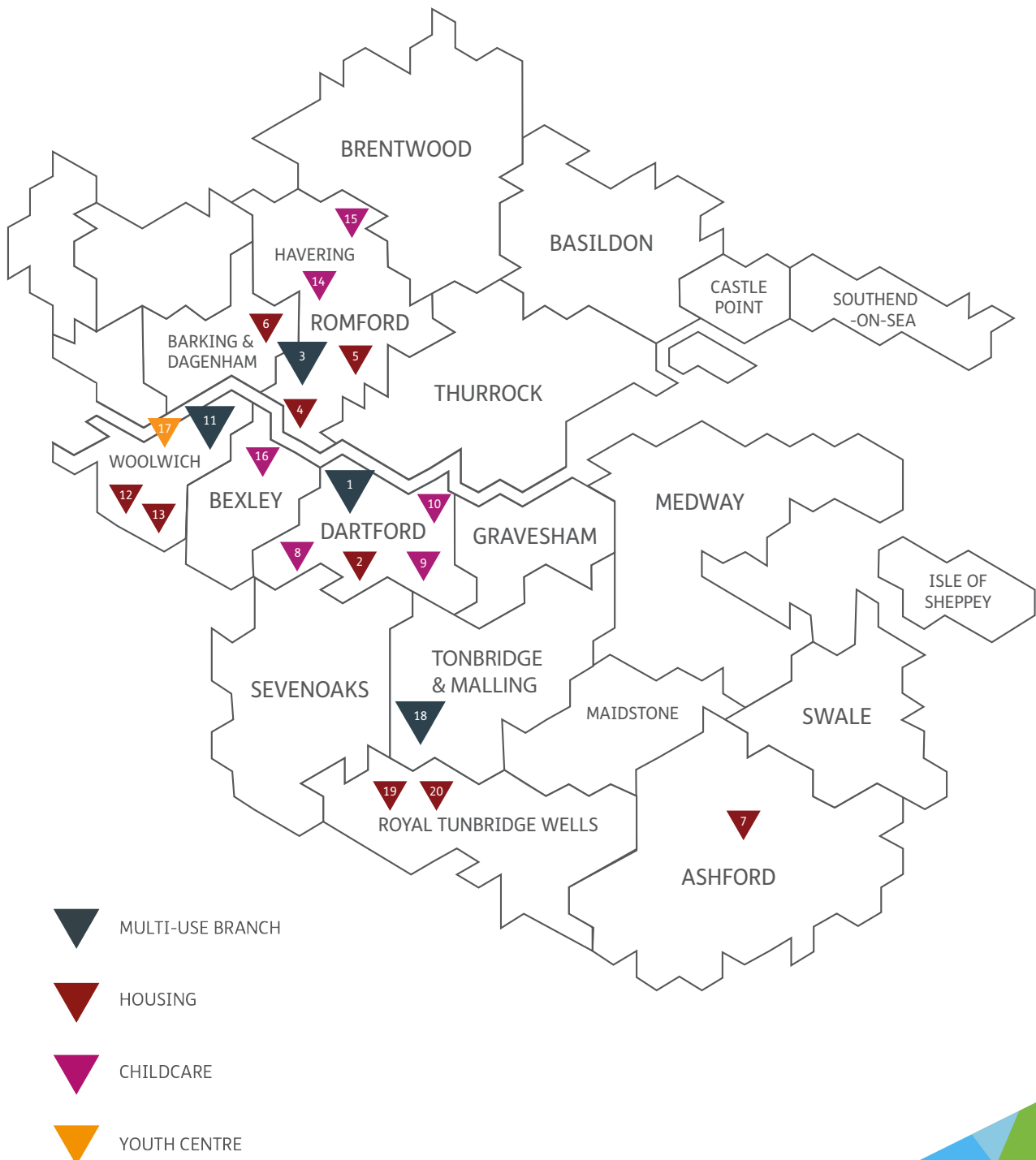
- 17 Youth Zone, Woolwich

### Housing

- 4 Red Triangle House, Romford
- 5 George Williams House, Romford
- 6 St Chad's, Chadwell Heath
- 7 Housing, Ashford
- 2 Housing, Dartford
- 12 Defiance Walk, Woolwich
- 13 Sarah Turnbull House, Woolwich
- 19 Ryder House
- 20 Quaker Meeting House

### Childcare

- 8 Oakfield Nursery, Dartford
- 9 Swanscombe Preschool, Dartford
- 10 Temple Hill Nursery, Dartford
- 14 After School Club, Romford
- 15 After School Club, Romford
- 16 Lakeside Nursery, Thamesmead



# Our Vision

Helping people to be the best they can be – to reach their full potential – is something that we are committed to. Being able to belong, contribute and thrive underpins our five core values.

1

## **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.

2

## **We welcome**

We offer people the space they need to feel secure, respected, heard and valued; and we always protect, trust, hope and persevere.

3

## **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.

4

## **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 lives, and help them to find confidence in their own voice.

5

## **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.

# Our Services

Working across Essex, Kent and London, we provide support in a variety of ways:



## Accommodation

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



## Children's, Youth & Family Work

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



## Health & Wellbeing

- ▶ We believe that everyone should be able to enjoy the benefits of physical health.



## Training & Education

- ▶ We believe every young person should be able to fulfil their potential.



## Support & Advice

- ▶ We believe every person should have someone they can trust and turn to for support and advice.



# Value for Money

**Providing value for money is vital for any charity. Ensuring that we don't compromise on quality while ensuring we get as much as we can for our money, means spending less, spending well and spending wisely.**

A focus on value for money is an objective that all staff are now aware of. Every role has a requirement to think about the value for all orders they are placing, questioning costs they believe to be too high, and getting multiple quotes for purchases.

By looking at value for money we want to make sure that:

- ▶ what we do is relevant and leads to benefits for young people (spend wisely)
- ▶ how we work is efficient and effective so we don't waste time or money (spend less)
- ▶ we get a good return from what we spend and make wise choices (spend well).

Over the past year, we generated £627,593 of value for money benefits. This was a combination of additional income, cashable and non-cashable saving, and was achieved across all departments. Here are some highlights:

- ▶ £365,000 of additional housing rental income secured through a forensic review of service charges and operating costs
- ▶ £47,000 of free and heavily discounted Microsoft operating licenses through our IT team
- ▶ £26,300 in crowdfunding raised by the Housing team to settle residents' arrears to help avoid eviction
- ▶ £25,000 secured by the Fundraising team to fund vouchers for our food bank and community hamper project
- ▶ £20,150 grant obtained by the Fundraising team to provide extra meals for residents and additional support during the COVID pandemic
- ▶ £18,750 worth of free counselling service secured for our most vulnerable residents.
- ▶ £18,000 worth of move-on deposits raised by the Housing team to support residents' transitional journeys
- ▶ £15,000 secured by our Fundraising team to support our family inclusion work
- ▶ £10,000 worth of additional support from an international volunteer, arranged through the Human Resources team
- ▶ £5,000 worth of savings by the Human Resources department by delivering 16 in-house training courses
- ▶ £2,000 discount secured through our Quality and Compliance team for core training packages



# Accommodation

**Despite the global pandemic, and a slight delay to our new development, Park View officially opened in July 2021.**

Providing high quality, one-bedroom move-on units, our newest building is located behind the Romford hostel in Rush Green Road. Within a three-week period, we successfully moved 39 residents into our new premises, refurbished the hostel rooms they vacated, and welcomed new residents in to the hostel. A huge piece of work for our Housing team but one that has made such a difference to all involved.

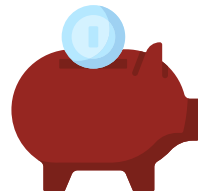
Providing a safe place to stay is at the heart of what we do – something we believe everyone is entitled to. Every year, we provide around 500 young people with a home in our 340 beds, which includes five family rooms. People come to us for help and support for a whole host of reasons and we're able to offer emergency housing, longer-term housing and move-on accommodation.



**474**

**people in our  
accommodation**

During the pandemic we continued to provide a home to those who needed it



**163**

**people moved on**

We were delighted to see 163 residents move on to their own accommodation

# Case Study

**Paul was born in Nigeria to a single mum. When he was 11, she died suddenly and tragically, just a week before they were due to fly to England to start a new life.**

Despite this, Paul's aunt brought him over to the UK and they settled in in south London. Their relationship was poor and at the age of 16, his aunt returned to Nigeria, leaving Paul alone in the UK. She took all of his identification with her - National Insurance card, passport etc. - which left Paul in a difficult situation.

Paul was scared that, if social services found out he was alone, he would be deported. Instead, Paul did what he could to look after himself. Over the next few years, he liaised with many different support agencies before finally being offered housing at the Romford branch of YMCA Thames Gateway.

Paul wasn't sure what to expect but quickly realized that the YMCA gave him stability - something he was

severely lacking in his life. He admits it took a while to find his groove but he made friends, started going to the gym and learnt to relax. Even though it was just one room, it was his room, his space, and that helped him no end. Paul has seen a psychotherapist and received support for the journey he has been on so far. He has been diagnosed with PTSD and anxiety, among other things, and continues to battle with.

Although Paul still has a journey to travel, he's a young man with a strong understanding of his own mental challenges. He knows why he feels like he does and knows how to manage his feelings. He has a desire to develop a career, to look after himself and hopefully a family in the future.

**“The stability of the YMCA was invaluable for me – having a roof over my head has made all the difference. If I hadn't found the YMCA I don't know where I would be, genuinely. It changed my life, man, and I'm not even trying to be cliché – it really did.”**

**Paul, resident**



# Support & Advice

**By the middle of 2020, people's mental health started to be really tested. Being forced to stay within our own homes, even knowing it was to help fight COVID-19, was tough but imagine how challenging that would be if your home is a room – just one room.**

For those of us with homes and some kind of outdoor space, being in lockdown was hard. For many in temporary accommodation, it was incredibly challenging.

Luckily we have a fantastic team of Support Workers who were on hand to provide support and guidance. Over 1,500 individual support sessions took place last year. Our hope is that those within our care leave us in a more positive place than they were in when they arrived with us.



**334**

**people received  
welfare and debt  
advice**



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**140**

**people used our  
mental health  
services**

## Last year we provided over 1,500 sessions including:



**103**  
people received  
sexual health advice



**334**  
people received  
skills based training



**334**  
people received  
crisis support



**56**  
people received  
counselling



**73**  
people received  
family mediation



**12**  
young offender  
schemes

**“ Thank you for letting me use the fitness studio during lockdown. Doing cardio really helps with my mental health.”**

**Wesley, resident**



# Training & Education

**The development of our residents is something we take incredibly seriously, and we believe that every young person should be able to fulfil their potential.**

Weekly activities were in place right from the very first lockdown, whilst at all times taking social distancing measures and restrictions in to account. All sites transformed existing spaces into safe, resident-friendly environments in which residents and staff were able to carry out support and activity based sessions.

The sports hall, dance studio and diner in Romford were used for socially-distanced exercising as well as an activity base for movies, arts and crafts etc. Many educational programmes continued and a number of residents gained qualifications through new means adapted to the times.

In Dartford, the team created a Foodbank for residents who were unable – or hesitant – to go shopping. This particular transformation gained YMCA recognition at Kent County Council Board level. Dartford also created a small gym, using items not in use at the Romford site and a cinema room was set up in the Dartford Café area.

Greenwich adapted the community room on the top floor for additional space for our customers.

## Some activities and events that have occurred across our sites:

- ▶ Daily arts and crafts
- ▶ Board game events
- ▶ Job clubs
- ▶ Online chill and chat sessions
- ▶ Music lessons
- ▶ Work related courses, such as construction, admin and CSCS training
- ▶ ESOL (English as a Second or Foreign Language)
- ▶ SIA (Security Industry Authority) training
- ▶ PRIDE month activities
- ▶ Social distanced resident forums

We were also pleased to see a number of our residents take up employment during the lockdown period, primarily in warehouse and delivery based roles.



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**334**

received skills based training

“YMCA has helped me immensely and I am grateful to them forever. Thank you so much for giving me shelter. Now I am leaving as an independent person because of your support.”

Mohammed, ex-resident



# Family Work

**Many families struggled with the lockdown. Home schooling children, the loss of jobs, of ability to take time out... so many reasons that family relationships have been challenged.**

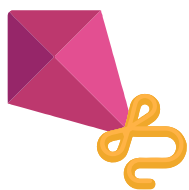
Luckily we were able to stay constant and provide support to those that use our services. Our focus very much remained on the children but with an eye on how things were at home during the pandemic. This year, our family inclusion work has never been more important, and as such it's an area we're keen to grow and develop to provide even more support to those that need it.

**“ I am so impressed with the staff at Lakeside Nursery. My son has autism and their support has been amazing since he began. During a time when the children cannot go to nursery and live their normal lives, I have received so much support.”**

**Maria, parent**

“ It’s a great area of support and link to normality in these unprecedented times. It was fun doing activities with my daughter and such a lovely surprise when some reading and colouring books were delivered to our house.”

Early years parent



**850**

children and families cared for across our settings



**245**

family 1:1 sessions, group sessions and workshops

Our three day-care nurseries and two preschools stayed open, prioritising the care of keyworker children, and we opened our holiday club during school holidays, again to support keyworkers. By providing childcare to keyworkers, they were able to carry on doing their jobs – from driving delivery lorries to working in hospitals. We are proud to have been able to help.

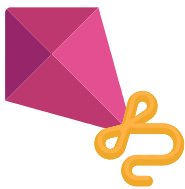
Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we were unable to offer birthday parties during this financial year but we’re really looking forward to welcoming young people back to celebrate their birthdays with us!



# Youth Work

**Despite the pandemic, we were able to continue working with young people who would usually attend our Woolwich Youth Zone.**

We carried out schools mentoring sessions supporting ‘at risk’ young people, helping them to build resilience, develop communication and teamwork skills and grow in self-worth and confidence; and we stayed in touch with the families known to us, providing help and support where we could.



**133**

**1:1 sessions and group sessions with young people**



**10**

**laptops to help support young peoples studies**

**“ I was so impressed with the idea to do the cooking youth club session as a Zoom call. My son’s development over the last 6 months mum has really come on and he seems a lot more settled. We’re so grateful for the continued support from the youth team.”**

**Mrs Fraser, Parent**



# Health & Wellbeing

**Staying mentally well as well as physically well was a huge challenge for many during the lockdowns we experienced.**

As soon as the pandemic hit, we had to react and we moved much of our class offering online. The digital fitness service – allowing people to attend classes with an instructor from their own homes – proved to be really popular both during and after lockdown. From Yoga to Body Pump, there was something for everyone.

Then, when we were able to open again, but with limited numbers in indoor spaces, we opened up our RPM room to family groups. We put divider screens in the gym to allow people to work out together yet apart. We did all we could to ensure our members could look after their physical and mental wellbeing.



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**825**  
**members utilised**  
**our digital fitness**  
**classes**



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**100**  
**email**  
**communications**  
**to our members**

Sadly we had to halt our usual schedule of health programmes both in our local communities and in schools and colleges. We're really proud of the specialist services and rehabilitation classes we offer, and a team of staff and volunteers stayed in touch with some of the more vulnerable people we support, such as our senior citizens group.

# Our Locations

## YMCA Romford

**Straddling the borders of Havering and Barking & Dagenham, we have had a presence in the local area for over 100 years. We have been at our main site in Rush Green Road since 1969. We offer a range of inclusive activities to the local community, through health and wellbeing, supported housing, children's youth & family work and training & education.**

We provide supported housing for 148 young people, with an additional 61 move-on flats to support independent living. Our support programmes provide employment and benefits advice, informal educational support, outdoor education and access to our health and wellbeing facilities.

We are a gym with a difference and, as a charity, provide a range of services to support the local community – we aim to ensure that everyone is able to reach their full potential. We have a modern and spacious gym with all the latest cardio, strength and training equipment, a wide range of inclusive fitness classes and wellbeing programmes, a new virtual RPM studio, Personal training packages and a digital schedule for those who prefer to workout at home.

We deliver high quality, affordable, Ofsted inspected childcare throughout Havering. This includes a pre-school, after school and holiday clubs, birthday party packages, parent & toddler sessions and a youth club.

In our restaurant on the ground floor you can relax with a freshly made salad, a home-cooked hot meal, panini or a fairtrade coffee. We have a range of rooms for hire and can cater for anything from a small business meeting to a large social event. We also offer catering facilities and have a licensed bar. We provide ample FREE parking facilities and are in close proximity of the M25, A12, A13 and London.

### **For more information:**

Contact us on **01708 766211** or email **info@ymcatg.org**.

## YMCA Dartford

**Our Dartford branch is based at the Roundhouse in Overy Street and, provides supported and move-on housing, an on-site cafe and spaces for hire. We also have three nurseries and a charity shop in the local area.**

We provide supported accommodation for 46 young people, with additional move-on flats to support independent living. Our support programmes provide employment and benefits advice, and informal educational guidance.

We deliver high quality, affordable, Ofsted inspected childcare across the borough for children aged 1-5. Our settings are Temple Hill Nursery, Oakfield Nursery and Swanscombe Pre-school.

We also have a café and a range of rooms and spaces for hire and can cater for anything from a small business meeting to a large social event. We have a charity shop nearby in the town centre, are in close proximity of the M25, A2 and London and have good links to public transport.

### **For more information:**

Contact us on **01322 282030** or email **[info.dartford@ymcatg.org](mailto:info.dartford@ymcatg.org)**.

## YMCA Ashford

Our branch in Ashford provides three units of supported accommodation for nine young adults at risk of homelessness. Additional support from the Housing team includes benefits advice and employment and informal educational guidance.

## YMCA Woolwich

**YMCA Woolwich provides supported and move-on housing in the Woolwich Dockyard area. The dockyard is also home to our Woolwich Youth Zone, a youth club and outreach services for young people living locally. We have had a presence in Greenwich for over 45 years.**

Our housing in Greenwich is based in the Woolwich Dockyard area and consists of a mixture of bedsits and one-bedroom properties.

The Woolwich Youth Zone is the perfect place to have fun, make friends and be active! Our programmes provide young people with a safe place to meet friends and develop skills and interests whilst engaging in positive activities.

### **For more information**

Call us on **01708 766211** or email us at **[info.woolwich@ymcatg.org](mailto:info.woolwich@ymcatg.org)**.

## YMCA Thamesmead

**Our brand-new nursery and café in Thamesmead is located within the grounds of the Lakeside Centre on Bazalgette Way.**

Lakeside Nursery is a modern and secure space with creative and sound walls and has a fantastic outdoor space. We are open 51 weeks of the year with an experienced and inspirational staff team.

The Y on the Lake is our newest eatery and sits alongside the nursery. With views over the scenic Southmere Lake, the café provides both an eat in and takeaway service, serving a fantastic brunch of coffee and pastries, flat breads, English muffins and much more.

**We've had somany positive comments sent our way during and after lockdowns, and wanted to share a few:**

**“Thank you so very much for the Happiness Hamper you sent to my family and I. It really did put a smile on my face in what was a really tricky time for us. Anita**

**”**

**““ The activity and learning packs you dropped off for my 3 kids who go to the YMCA after school club are amazing. What a lovely unexpected surprise! So nice to know you're thinking of them!” Bobbi**

**“I'm writing on behalf of my mother who has received two very nice gift packs from YMCA Romford during lockdown. She wanted you all to know how much she appreciated the thoughtfulness that went with these gifts, especially the handwritten card. Sandra**

**”**

**““ I have been very happy with all the staff efforts during lockdown. Zoom classes amazing, information emails to keep you up to date. Lots of more expensive gyms haven't done as much. Also the slow return to normality for classes has been really reassuring.” Tina**

To help us reach even more young people, you can donate via our **Facebook** or visit **supportus.ymcatg.org**

To get involved or find out more about our work, visit **www.ymcatg.org**.

### YMCA Thames Gateway



[enquiries@ymcatg.org](mailto:enquiries@ymcatg.org)

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HCA Registration Number: L4547



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.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION