

YMCA Brighton: Our Year

April 2022 - March 2023



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An overview of our year.

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A message from Sarah Johnston-Ellis about the organisation's progress this year.

• A WORD FROM ONE OF YOUR CLIENT REPRESENTATIVES

A message from one of your Client Representatives about how they've championed your voice this year.

• WORKING TOGETHER

Details of how we empower clients to be involved, value their skills, listen and respond to their views, and take account of their needs.

• YOUR TENANCY

Our goal is to combat homelessness by supporting clients towards independent living. This section covers how we support clients with their current and future tenancies.

• COMMUNITY SPIRIT

We aim to provide an environment where people can feel safe and part of a community. We make sure antisocial behaviour is dealt with appropriately and work with local groups to build a sense of community.

• AT HOME

We work hard to ensure that clients' environment is positive and well-maintained. In this section we will show the work we do to make sure this is a reality.

• MONEY & MANAGING

Details of the steps we take to make sure we have effective modes of governance, and provide good value for money for all of our clients, funders and the public.

Our Year

Project Activity Budgets

We've listened and given clients more ownership over projects resources and budgets for activities and events.

Move On Fair

We hosted a Move On Fair with over 18 stall holders, to help clients understand their options for housing in the city.

Staffing

Clients took part in staff recruitment and shaped our staff inductions, rewards, communications around staff changes.

Pride Action Group

Clients told us they wanted us to be more active in the community. We set up a Pride Action Group, including a client volunteer position, to explore how we could get involved in Brighton Pride 2023.

"My keyworker is fantastic and it has been such a valuable stepping stone to help with my recovery."

YMCA Brighton Client*

Fundraising

We set up a Fundraising Working Group with a client volunteer position. Client Representatives led pitches for funding, and they created community fundraising guides.

Maintenance

We listened to you and grew our In-House Maintenance team to provide an efficient, cost-effective and positive client experience.

Youth Matters Awards

We won the 'Diversity Award' in the YMCA England and Wales 'Youth Matters Awards' for the work we have done to create an inclusive workplace.. We have been shortlisted for the awards: 'Education and Training' for EVOLVE and 'Support and Advice' for Client Involvement in 2023!



85% of clients agree that 'YMCA Brighton listens to my views and acts upon them'

517 maintenance issues addressed

91% of maintenance and repairs resolved in target timeframe

A Word From Your Chair of Board



Since 1870 YMCA Brighton has provided housing and support to the community of Brighton and Hove. Over the years the organisation has developed and evolved to meet the needs of our clients and our community, but one thing has remained constant, our commitment to provide support and compassion to all our clients as they embark on a pathway towards fulfilled and empowered living. We now provide high, medium, and low support accommodation across Brighton, Hove, and Portslade. We also provide volunteering, education and learning opportunities through Evolve.

This year it has been wonderful to see in-person activities flourishing at all our projects following the Covid years. Barbecues, art groups, breakfast clubs, gardening groups are all able to operate again and are thriving. It was great to be able to have the Client Appreciation Awards back after a two-year break. How wonderful it was to be able to recognise volunteers for their contributions to the organisation and to celebrate clients for their individual successes. Community is such a big part of what YMCA Brighton stands for and our community seems stronger than ever. This was clearly evident in our celebration of Brighton Pride. The wider Brighton and Hove community has been supporting us too through donations and choosing us to be their chosen charity.

At the YMCA England and Wales Youth Matters Awards we won the diversity award for 'our inclusive workplace'. This is wonderful recognition for the way we are all involved in developing the organisation to be inclusive, welcoming, and fair for all.

After the departure of Anne Cairns as our Chief Executive, at the end of 2022, YMCA Brighton was led by our Senior Leadership Team of Hélène Begg, Natasha Hooper and Elaine Madden who worked closely with the Board to ensure that we worked to deliver our 'Strengthening the Foundations' plan.

Finally, I would like to thank our wonderful client volunteers who give their time, passion, and experience to ensure that the voices of our clients are at the heart of our service delivery and our decision making.

Sarah Johnston-Ellis
YMCA Brighton Chair of the Board

A Word From Your Client Representatives

We are Wayne and Jess, Clients Representatives at Fred Emery Court.

It's been a great year at Fred Emery Court. Changes that have happened because of us are: the washing being more accessible to our residents (we listened to clients and created more laundry slots and evening ones); the engagement in the Tenants Meetings has increased; we fundraised £100 to invest in the project garden (look at the photos here for what we've planted!); and there has been a big improvement in the cleanliness and the maintenance of our patio.

What we enjoyed most this year has been presenting a pitch at 'Brighton Soup', an event to win fundraising from the local community. It was nerve-wracking but a massive achievement for our pitch to be picked as the winner. We also loved working as a team (as it used to be just one Client Representative at Fred Emery Court); the movie night; the BBQs; the trip to the garden center to spend the money we earned at Brighton Soup and seeing the garden come to life!

Our Client Representative team have also: been part of decision-making and communications on service charge and rent changes; interviewed staff; presented awards at our Client Appreciation Awards; and shaped policy like Health and Safety, Client Support, Antisocial Behaviour and Safeguarding.

The best part of volunteering as Client Representatives is feeling that you're the voice for others in the building, feeling that you have a sense of purpose, making more connections with other residents, and seeing the enjoyment of the people in different activities organized at Fred Emery.



Jess and Wayne

YMCA Brighton Client Representatives

Working Together

Clients, staff and board have worked closely together to develop and shape the future of YMCA Brighton. We pride ourselves on keeping clients at the heart of service delivery and decision-making.

85% of clients agree that 'YMCA Brighton **listens** to my views and acts upon them' (up from 81%)

234 complaints

89% of informal complaints resolved in target timeframe (7 days)

Staffing and Resources

Our brand-new Fundraising Group was set up this year. We created a client-volunteer position in the group, to ensure clients have the opportunity to steer what we raise money for and how we do it. Together, we are exploring new and creative ways we can raise money focussing on resourcing initiatives important to clients. Clients led pitches for fundraising bids, and created community fundraising guides, promoting a sense of ownership and empowerment.

Our dedicated client volunteers played a pivotal role in improving our staff induction processes and participated in staff recruitment, including our Head of Housing and Community Services and frontline staff. Responding to clients' feedback for more information about staffing teams and changes, we've included staff updates and introductions in our regular newsletters, developed staff profiles for each project, and increased staff lanyard usage.



Listening and Valuing

We've taken great strides in enhancing transparency and accountability to our clients. They've reviewed policies, strategies, codes of conduct, and monitored action plan progress. We've adjusted how we communicate performance information, focusing on what, how, and when clients want to hear from us, and we'll continue building on this.

Clients told us that they wanted more transparency around resources for project activities and events. In response, we provided each project with bank cards and budgets, fostering transparency and client ownership over spending. Now, clients and staff collaboratively manage these budgets.

Our ever-growing annual Client Appreciation Awards celebrated clients' successes, including their contributions to YMCA Brighton, their poetry, personal achievements, art, teamwork, and volunteering.

We've revamped our complaints process to ensure effective listening and action on concerns. We introduced a central complaints recording system and conducted workshops to handle complaints supportively. This makes it easier for clients to provide feedback and ensures their satisfaction with the process.

**“We’ve worked all together
and we’ve created ideas
that are out of this world.
We’ve done things right and
people agree.**

**When I’m volunteering, I’m
thinking of other people.
It’s not about me, it’s about
everyone else. It’s about
looking after one another.**

**We’re living on our own,
but we’re in the same boat
as each other. We’re in a
community together.”**

Wayne Newnham, Client Representative

Looking Forward

We have been shortlisted for the Support and Advice Project of the Year Award at the YMCA England and Wales annual Youth Matters Awards. This award is in recognition of our efforts to ‘create a culture of collaboration’ and ensure clients are at the heart of decision making.

We are developing our Personal Budgets scheme. This scheme enables clients to make decisions about how their care and/or support is delivered and allows clients to identify what support/items they need to help them achieve their aspirations.

We are looking forward to improving the service charge consultation process, as well as increasing **client involvement in budgeting discussions**.

Your Tenancy

Housing Support


In May, we organized a Move On Fair to help clients understand their options for transitioning to accommodation in the community. We had 18 stall holders representing 10 flagship providers of supported housing, move-on options, and life skills services in the city. We also listened to clients and invited those who have already made the move to share their experiences.

Housing Provision

So that we can support as many clients as possible, we aim to keep empty rooms to a minimum. We ensure accommodation meet the Decent Homes Standard. This means sometimes work needs to be done in between tenancies. Check out our 'At Home' section to see the steps we've taken to improve our maintenance services and reduce property vacancies.

Most of our referrals come directly from Brighton and Hove City Council. However, we keep a close eye on the accessibility of our services in terms of gender and ethnicity. Our demographics align with the general population, and there are no concerning trends in our tenancy allocations.

In terms of evictions, the rates were higher in 2022-23 (a total of 16) than we'd prefer. However, when analysing eviction demographics, it's clear that no one protected group was disproportionately evicted compared to our overall client base.



““If my experience can help someone else a little further along the way, then that’s my mission done.”

Former client, invited to share experience of moving on

Lucy's Story

I left home when I was 18 because I felt I was always upsetting people. Looking back, if we'd known I have autism we could have talked about it.

My family and teachers didn't know what to do. I didn't either. I was very angry, depressed and I felt so sad. Smells, bright lights, feeling too hot – 'sensory overload' I now know it's called – would all upset me.

For a long time, I thought it was my fault that I seem to annoy people, that I was just not likable. Since I was diagnosed with autism in my early 20s, however, I know that a lot of what happened is because I'm Neurodivergent.

When I left home I tried living in bedsits, but had a breakdown. I moved into supported housing where I was put in a flat with people I had nothing in common with. One night the bullying got so frightening I had to lock myself in my room. So when my key worker told me about a flat of my own YMCA, I said yes.

YMCA was the turning point for me. The staff are lovely. If I was panicking, I could go downstairs and they knew how to calm me down. They understood that loud noises overwhelm me and I'm not good with my things being moved. Julie, my key worker, came to psychiatrist appointments and helped me to access counselling.

Julie also helps me with skills I need like making phone calls. I get confused and overwhelmed to the point I couldn't pick up the phone. She talked to me like a normal person, which I really valued. Some people shout at me or talk down to me.

The most challenging thing in my life has been loneliness. But this year I decided it was time to be more independent. She found a flat with a garden for me, with a key worker to pop in once a week and I can even have a pet there!

I moved in earlier this year. I want to go back to work soon. I may not be able to manage many hours, but it means a lot to me to be able to do something.

62% of departures were **planned moves** (down from 65%)

22% of moves were **evictions** (up from 11%)

86.3% of the time our **accommodation** was full (down from 98.5%)

Looking Forward

We are undertaking an eviction review to help identify good and poor practice in terms of avoiding evictions.

We are to further prevent and reduce number of unplanned moves e.g. through identifying training needs, case reviews and multidisciplinary teams



Community Spirit

Our Commitment to Inclusion and Diversity

We're thrilled to have won the Diversity Award at the YMCA England and Wales Youth Matters Awards. This recognition highlights our commitment to creating an inclusive workplace.

In response to client feedback, we've made several positive changes. We've hosted workshops involving both clients and staff to discuss equality and inclusion. We've stepped up our efforts for awareness days that promote inclusion, and expanded our training programs. This includes active listening training to enhance our team's knowledge of inclusivity and equality, ensuring clients' voices are heard, and they feel comfortable expressing themselves. We have established specialist women's workers in 5 projects, and have also established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) working group for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions.

To further promote inclusivity, we established a Pride Action Group to join the Brighton Pride Parade in 2023. During National Inclusion Week, we organized a film night where clients chose 'Peanut Butter Falcon' to spark conversations about diversity and equality.

86% of clients agree that 'YMCA Brighton treats me fairly and with respect'

75% of clients satisfied with our approach to handling antisocial behaviour (up from 70%)

53 safeguarding

concerns raised

37.7% safeguarding concerns raised were related to self-neglect

Looking Forward

We're committed to enhancing safeguarding, aiming for a 100% training completion rate while using the safeguarding review to identify staff training needs (i.e. self-neglect). A monthly Safeguarding Forum for project safeguarding leads will ensure alignment with the Care Act and best practices.

We will advance our management of hate incidents with increased resources, communication and tracking.

To foster inclusivity, we're creating a dedicated webpage and boosting activities around equality and inclusion awareness days. We're exploring policy workshops for project managers, covering topics like antisocial behavior, hate incidents, and our Single Equality Scheme.

We will be expanding training to address discrimination, microaggressions, and improving information sharing and transparency, and ensure 100% core EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) training compliance. We will explore EDI consultation and accreditation schemes to advance EDI across service delivery.

Feeling Safe in Your Neighbourhood

We appointed a dedicated Safeguarding Lead and set up a Safeguarding Working Group to oversee our safeguarding action plan. New policies, including Safeguarding and Antisocial Behavior and Hate Incident, were launched after client input. We also improved staff training, ensuring mandatory safeguarding e-training is completed before staff begin project work.

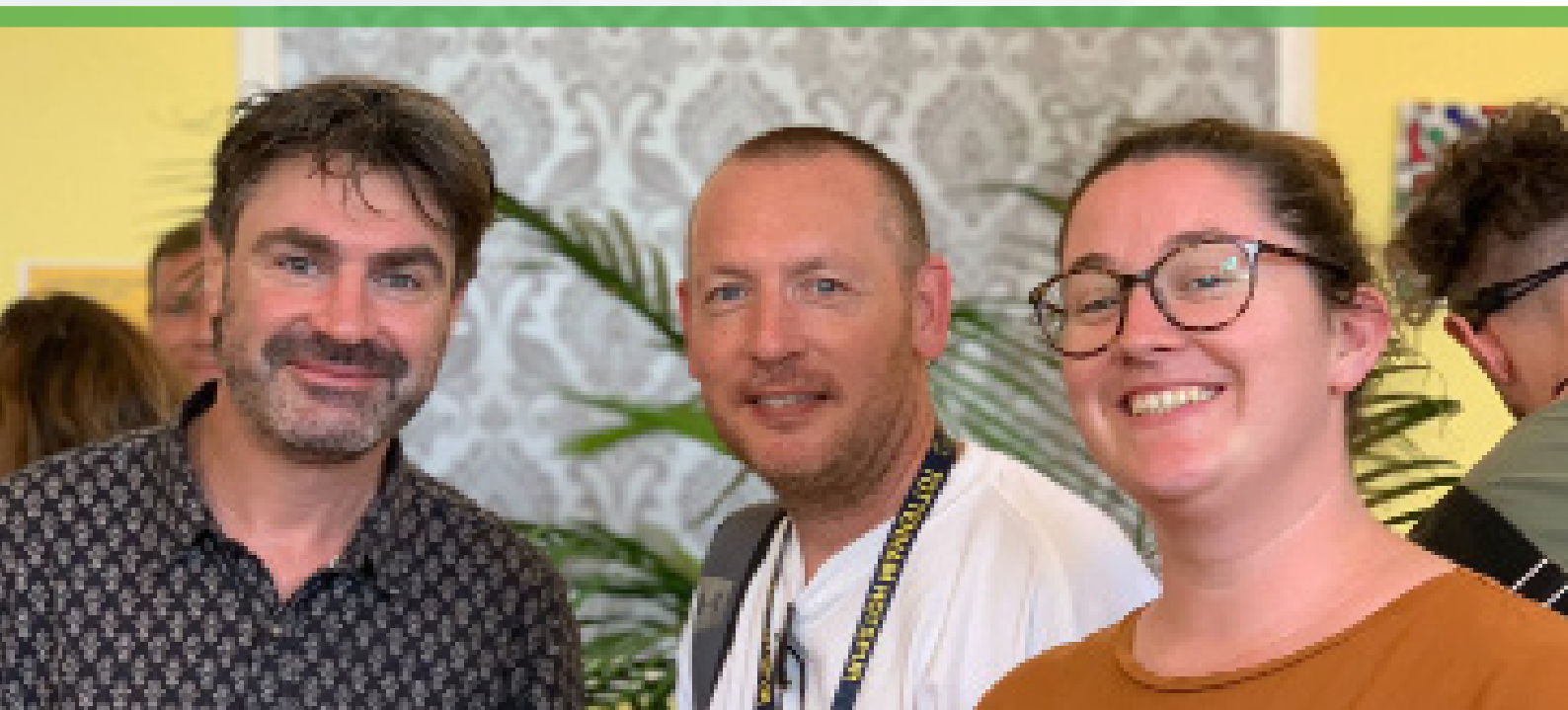
We joined local initiatives like the Joint Action Group and Brighton and Hove Business Crime Reduction Partnership to address issues in our area, working alongside Sussex Police and local authorities. We're actively contributing to the safety and rehabilitation of our community.

Responding to client requests, we secured £4,000 from the Community Safety Fund to enhance CCTV coverage at William Collier House. We also enlisted security firms to provide 24-hour coverage to stabilize the antisocial incidents.

We saw an increase in incidents in this financial year. This increase does not necessarily reflect an increase in incidents from 2021/2022, rather than an improvement in recording by staff. We believe there is still work to be done to improve reporting of incidents.

“I have received warmth and support throughout my time here. My life, whilst I still have some health issues, has moved on considerably and I can say with confidence that my life is a complete turnaround due in full to the safety and security and support the structure here has allowed me.”

YMCA Brighton Client*



At Home

Listening

“All the staff have been friendly and helpful. They are always around if you ever need to talk. I love my flat and feel very safe in my surroundings”

YMCA Brighton Client

We have made huge strides in improving our accommodation services, and developing our approach to maintenance, health and safety.

Thanks to valuable client feedback, we gained a better understanding of our system's gaps and needs. In response, we expanded our in-house maintenance team and carried out comprehensive upgrades to our maintenance and Health and Safety plans.

We're committed to placing client voices at the center of our housing management, in accordance with the Social Housing White Paper. We've increased the visibility and accessibility of our Health and Safety Coordinator, ensured clients have opportunities to assess and provide feedback during 'project walkarounds,' and consistently shared clear and transparent information about our Health and Safety performance.

Health and Safety

In our 2022-2023 audits, each of the seven projects improved their Health and Safety scores by at least 10% compared to the previous year. We also completed major projects, including:

- Replacing the intercom 'tunstall' system at William Collier House to improve client communications, especially in emergencies.
- Replacing tanks in Small Houses and William Collier House.
- Upgrading radios at George Williams Mews.
- Installing new windows at Fred Emery Court.



Looking Forward

In 2023-2024, we're enhancing our Property Services Team with an Assistant Property Maintenance Operative and a Plumber to expedite repairs. Monthly maintenance meetings with project managers and maintenance trackers help track and improve repairs are to be standard.

Responding to client feedback, we're undertaking extensive construction work at Stanley Court and Fred Emery Court to increase private meeting spaces. Major exterior decoration and repairs are planned for Steine House, Fred Emery Court, Leslie Best House, and Old Shoreham Road properties in 2023/2024. We will replace the fire doors and lock system at William Collier House.

To improve incident reporting and tracking, we'll provide training, host quarterly incident review meetings with managers, and explore incident reporting software. We will increase clients' involvement in Health and Safety decision making.

We will review our response to hoarding and produce a hoarding policy.

517 **maintenance** issues (down from 701)

91% of repairs **resolved** in target timeframe (up from 72%)

49% of **delayed** repairs were due to: needing to order parts (up from 37%)

100% **compliance** in lifts, fire, electrics, gas, water, and asbestos checks



EVOLVE



[EVOLVE](#) has had a very successful year and has been able to welcome clients from services across the city to its relaxed and calm space to begin their coaching journey.

The service has welcomed several new staff members who have worked hard alongside clients to develop a psychologically informed environment that allows people space to focus on their work, learning and volunteering goals.

Alongside our 1-1 coaching offer using the GROW model (where the client is the expert in their situation), we have hosted a range of workshops and activities to build people's confidence, try something new and express their creativity. Workshops have covered:

- 'Meet the service' with mindful colouring
- Nordoff Robbins Music therapy (1hr group and slots for 1-1 sessions)
- 'Stories we tell' group currently working on short stories
- Volunteer searching workshops
- International Women's Day events
- Career Quiz – which career is right for you?
- Terrarium Making Workshop
- Improve your budgeting skills
- CV Writing workshops
- Clay making
- Themed collaging
- LGBTQ Words and Voices

57 clients supported

67% of clients achieved at least one education, work or volunteering goal

Alex's Story

In November 2022, Alex joined EVOLVE with hopes of becoming a psychologist and seeking LGBTQ+ psychology volunteering. Concerned about their disabilities and accessibility, they found support at EVOLVE, where we ensured they had the opportunity to voice any adjustments they may need.

By January 2022, Alex completed an online Level 2 psychology diploma. We struggled to find an affordable Level 3 course, exploring options like learner loans and payment plans. Shifting focus, we discovered a fitting opportunity – a peer mentoring role at Mindout (LGBTQ+ mental health charity). This role suited Alex perfectly, given their deep (personal and academic) understanding of LGBTQ+ mental health issues and their dedication to supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Together, we crafted their personal statement and a character reference.

At a job fair, we found a free Level 3 psychological skills course for individuals receiving benefits. They joined the Aldridge Adult Learning taster session in August, and enrolled in September, another step closer to their dream.

During their journey, Alex engaged in various learning opportunities, from anxiety and resilience courses to volunteering with Possability People, sharing their mental health and homelessness experiences to support others. Their persistence and EVOLVE's assistance have been key to their success.

Money and Managing

Managing and Governance

Following the departure of key senior leaders at the end of 2022, we appointed a new Head of Housing to join the existing Leadership Team in January 2023. In March, the Board adopted an interim strategic plan to strengthen our current work.

Our independent Board of Management oversees safeguarding, resource management, and strategic goals. Working with the Senior Leadership Team are strategic specialists and project management. We implement robust performance management, monitoring and auditing, including board sub-committees like the Client Services Advisory Group (CSAG), where clients, board members, and head office staff guide strategy and policy.

We've invested in staff to ensure a stable and well-supported team. This included salary reviews, updating salaries to better reflect the cost of living, conducting staff satisfaction surveys, introducing an intranet for resources and communication, and implementing a central online Human Resources system (Citrus HR).

Looking Forward

We will work with staff, board and clients to create a YMCA Brighton strategy for the years to come. We hope to bring together our community's vision of what YMCA Brighton is and develop our goals and actions for the future.

We hope to improve staff and trustee diversity in relation to age and sex by, for example, monitoring our recruitment approach and ensuring it is inclusive, including appropriate inclusivity training for recruitment teams; expanding where our jobs are advertised; and reviewing our job advertisements to ensure appeal to a diverse range of people.



Finances and Value for Money

YMCA Brighton's financial position remains stable but like many other organisation we are facing challenges associated with the cost of living crisis, rising inflation, funding cuts and the increase cost of repairs and building materials. For the year ending March 31, 2023, the organisation reported a deficit of £39,319, compared to a surplus of £88,229 in 2021-2022. Our income for 2022-23 was £5,217,832, our expenditure was £5,257,151.

A purchase order system was adopted to increase financial control and contractor value-checking. Our strengthened maintenance team is expected to reduce day-to-day maintenance costs. Additionally, we've saved money by expanding a financial support role, optimising benefit utilisation. Rent and service charges have been reviewed and updated (in accordance with the Rent Standard formula) in consultation with Client Representatives.

“Staff are approachable, friendly, etc and on the whole it is a good environment to live in, thank you.”

YMCA Brighton Client



Any questions?

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**YMCA
BRIGHTON**

YMCA

YMCA enables people to develop their full body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our core values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising spaces where young people can truly belong, connect and thrive.

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