



## Treasurer's Report

The financial accounts of North Down YMCA have been audited by Johnston Graham Limited according to the Charities SORP and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, applicable law and the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice, "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" and requirements of the Companies Act 2006. The total income amounted to £844,483 with expenditure of £846,995. The Executive Committee has set a target of building unrestricted reserves to the level of six months operational costs which equate to approximately £300,000. Currently our unrestricted cash reserves have reached £89,284. At a time of financial restraint, the charity is reporting a small deficit of £2512 however we are pleased that the charity is financially stable and maintains a sound financial balance.

We recognise a challenge lies ahead for the wider voluntary and community sector with the planned reduction of government spending and an increase to core operational costs and cost of living pressures.

I would further like to acknowledge the work of the Finance Officer for her excellent work in the financial management and support throughout the preparation of the audited accounts. Special mention should be made to Stuart (outgoing CEO) and the Team, for the manner in which they have sought and succeeded in obtaining new and alternative funding for projects going forward.

Full set of accounts are available at the North Down office or on request to [Lisa@northdownymca.org](mailto:Lisa@northdownymca.org)

## Funders of North Down YMCA 2022-2023

We would like to thank the following organisations for their financial support over the past year. Without their support we would not have been able to offer such a quality service across the whole organisation.

- |                           |  |             |
|---------------------------|--|-------------|
| Ards & North Down Council | National Lottery                           | TEO         |
| BBC Children In Need      | NI Housing Executive Supporting People     | YMCA Europe |
| Bright Start              | NI Housing Executive SPOD                  | PCSP        |
| Department of Health      | Public Health Agency                       |             |
| Education Authority       | South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust |             |



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022 - 2023

## Chairperson's Report

### A Year to Remember and Celebrate.

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to our 2022-23 Annual Report. This past year has seen us and our communities continue to recover from the impact of the covid pandemic and face head on external challenges given the absence of a functioning Executive and local Assembly. Internally we have also seen many changes throughout the year, namely with the departure of our outgoing CEO, Stuart Buchanan. On behalf of the Board and staff team, we would like to acknowledge Stuart's unprecedented contribution to North Down YMCA and to wish him well in his new endeavours.

North Down YMCA's success is clearly due to the hard work, dedication, and selfless contributions of our fantastic staff team, volunteers, young people, service users, and Board. During this year of change and restructure staff have continued to work with skill, determination and passion; as they always do. Thank you one and all! Collectively we have continued to deliver on our organisational vision and goals but

have also strived to improve upon our overall achievements and impact which can be seen within this short report.

In times of need, the YMCA has continually stepped up. North Down YMCA has risen to meet the needs of our communities and is delivering programmes and services that provide life-changing support that is needed now more than ever. We acknowledge that this last year has seen an increase in complex social challenges within our communities; increased poverty, homelessness, addiction and a widespread concern about the emotional health & wellbeing of our children, young people and citizens across society. Whilst these ongoing issues have been present for quite some time; the world-wide pandemic and economic crisis have really shone a spotlight on the need for us to see the true depth of support our communities need to stay healthy, happy and connected.

North Down YMCA has risen to meet the needs of our communities and is delivering programmes and services that provide life-changing support to individuals and families. We have successfully delivered services including - housing and floating support, ethnic minority support, youth programmes, health and community engagement (such as men's health programmes, community lunches, friendship groups, drop-ins

and 1:1 support) and the provision of School aged Childcare which offers a quality, safe and caring environment in which children can grow, learn, play and develop whilst supporting parent/s to engage in economic activity.

By bringing together people from different backgrounds, perspectives and generations, we have worked hard to build a welcoming, inclusive environment where all can have 'Hope, Belong, Contribute and Thrive'.

I hope you enjoy reading a few of the significant highlights from 22-23; we have much to be proud of at North Down.

*Finally, a note of thanks to our funders, supporters and advocates without whom none of this would be possible.*

*Best wishes,*

*Angela Stallard  
Chair of the Board of Trustees  
and Board.*

## Community and Youth Programmes

Our community & youth programmes continue to offer a diverse range of programmes which support vibrant communities and brighter futures for youth, adults and families in North Down. It's been a challenging and rewarding year rolled into one as we continue to feel the impact of Covid-19 pandemic in relation to mental health and isolation coupled alongside the continuing cost of living crisis which are emphasising the economic, health and social inequalities in the area.

The Harbour Renewal Project seeks to tackle disadvantage and build community capacity and this year there has been an increase in demand for our services, reflected across the wider voluntary sector. We continue to work in

partnership with North Down and Ards Borough Council (Community Development), North Down Community Network, Bangor Foodbank, UHub etc to facilitate joined-up working to effectively meet the evolving needs of the local community.

Through meaningful activities we aim for participants to feel increased connectedness, health and wellbeing. Weekly advice and information sessions, a 55+ Friendship Group and one to one targeted support sessions provide practical and emotional support for adults. Our Yspace Community Cafe - provides warm space and a hot meal twice a week, which aims to increase social cohesion and connection while addressing food insecurity. Highlight's from the last year include Festive Fun @ YMCA, Wellbeing Walks and Mental Health Days. We are looking forward to another busy year supporting individuals, families and the local community.

We offer a range of opportunities for young

people to achieve and develop their learning. Increased membership and a diverse range of programmes has allowed us to support over 2400 young people. Weekday and weekend provision, targeted groupwork, 40+ diversionary and outreach sessions and youth leadership training all contribute to this achievement.



## Housing Support

Modern crises including homelessness, cost of living, lack of social housing and high cost of private rentals continue to place significant pressure on people and families. Our floating support service aims to help individuals (18 to 65 years old) with issues affecting their housing and to contribute to the development of a more secure & stable housing situation whilst promoting independent living. A person centred approach means a diverse range of support is offered to meet the needs of individuals including, help with completing forms, applying for benefits, help with debt/arrears & money management, decluttering homes, maximising housing points, assistance within the private

rental sector, support to set up a home and liaising with other professionals.

The relationship between health and housing is well documented and subsequently we have experienced the increased complex health need on many of our service users which have resulted in a stretch of the traditional housing role. However, we face all these crises head on and recognise that progress can be achieved and have learnt to celebrate every win along the way. These wins include a dedicated, experienced and empathetic staff team who listen, value, advocate and strive to do their very best to empower individuals and improve their housing circumstances enabling us to achieve many positive outcomes.

Of the 164 individuals supported our many wins saw 32 individuals receive support to set up and settle into a new home, securing deposits for

9 individuals to each secure a private tenancy, advocating for 72 individuals to maximise their housing points, helping 59 individuals secure the correct benefits, securing counselling for 24 individuals and liaising with local food banks to provide food hampers to 65 individuals. Stability, independence and dignity being restored.



## Ethnic Minorities Support

Ethnic Minorities Support Project provides support to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and ethnic minorities across the South-Eastern Trust area. In 2022 we expanded our services to Belfast where we work regularly with the Polish community, particularly with homeless and destitute people. Services provided by EMS project include: advocacy, welfare and immigration advice, ESOL classes and friendship groups. From April 2022 up to 31st of March 2023, EMS provided 2244 advocacy sessions to 600 BAME adults. In addition to that number, 240 people received support with securing their immigration status in the UK.

In the financial year 2022/23 we were working closely with the following partners: Lisburn YMCA, County Down Rural Community Network, The Link, South Tyrone Empowerment Programme and Ards and North Down Borough

Council. Our programmes were funded by The Executive Office (bilingual advocacy work, groups, English classes, Crisis Fund payments); Justice Together Initiative (immigration work); Ards and North Down Borough Council Good Relations (work with newcomers in the Borough); YMCA Europe (work with Ukrainian refugees); Awards for All (work with asylum seekers and refugees); Arts Council NI (art workshops for people from ethnic minority background); VSB Foundation (work with refugee women).

Cost of Living, changes in the law and war in Ukraine made 2022 a busy and challenging year for EMS project. The war in Ukraine caused an influx of Ukrainian refugees, mostly women and children mainly through the homes for Ukraine scheme. Weekly bi-lingual advocacy sessions for Ukrainians and their hosts was followed by the 'Vitajemo' project funded by YMCA Europe. Vitajemo aims to help Ukrainian refugees to overcome barriers to settling in the community by providing opportunities to get to know each other and make friends.

Changes in international law after Brexit

caused an influx of asylum seekers in the UK. Since January 2022 we have been actively engaging with the local Council and other charity organisations, to find the most effective ways to support those living in contingency accommodation across Ards and North Down Borough.

Our service users were trying to cope with rising prices, housing crisis, long NHS waiting lists, and changes in the immigration law. They needed a lot of support to navigate the system and to challenge decision makers.



## Health and Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing underpins much of the work of YMCA.

YMCA recognises that health & wellbeing is the bedrock to enable young people, families and communities do develop in all areas of life. The PSAM (Prevention of Suicide Amy Men) programme supports men through the mental and physical health challenges of the post pandemic world by building opportunities for hope and optimism for the future.

37+ groupwork sessions and intensive one to one support allowed for person centred, needs led service delivery. Workshop themes including money management, cookery classes and the 'Onside Digital Skills Project' designed to tackle social isolation and delivered in partnership with

Disability Action. 20 individuals benefited from 960 hours of one to one support addressing poor mental health, relationship breakdown and financial stress. Moving forward a collaborative partnership with Inspire Wellbeing will build and strengthen outcomes for service users.

The South Eastern Trust Youth Health Advice Service (YHAS) for 16-25 year olds operates over eight venues in the trust. Weekly drop-in/clinic's provide confidential non-judgemental health advice in relation to relationship and sexuality education, sexual health, drugs and alcohol and emotional well-being.

The service offers a blended approach of targeted group work, one to one support and a digital platform of text a nurse. Our weekly drop-in CHAT (Confidential Health Advice for Teens) has had a very busy period and provided 37+ sessions which included workshops on: Sexual health, healthy relationships, gender/identity, school pressures and vaping. On average 25 young people attended these sessions.

The promotion of the service and partnership working with agencies across the community and statutory sectors has been a key element to the success which has enabled 2304 health related contacts to be facilitated, with a further 493 SERC students participating in 35 class talks. While the community provision in youth centres engaged with 203 young people across 17 settings.



## Childcare

YMCA After School Club works alongside 3 local primary schools to provide a safe, secure, stimulating and child-centred environment for 185 children and families. We focus on child-led play, encouraging children to plan activities and resources around their play needs. During our sessions, we have been able to offer den building, outings to forest parks, messy play opportunities, sensory play, cookery, crafts and outdoor adventures. Holiday Clubs at Easter and Summer were a great success, with children being able to get out and about in the local community and play! We took trips to Hillsborough Forest Park, took the bus to Donaghadee, tackled the maze at Castlewellan and experienced the magic of the Galgorm Fairy Trail.

Throughout this year ongoing financial and emotional health and wellbeing pressures have been noticeable for the families we support.

These crises then contributing to family breakdown, anxiety and the child's behaviour changing all add to the pressure. YMCA staff endeavour to support children, parents and families in the best way we can, whilst signposting to additional support services in the area.

The 'Childcare Partnership Small Grants Scheme' allowed some refurbishment works, and provided funding for the purchase of outdoor play equipment. Children have really benefited from the equipment and we have been able to enjoy outdoor play in all weathers. To address financial stress we have frozen the cost of fees to ensure that increasing costs weren't passed on to our families and we also connected a number of parents to the 'Employers for Childcare Family Benefits Advice' team, who provided advice on getting help with childcare costs. As we move forward we continue to seek ways to reduce the financial burden on families through affordable childcare.

Our current team of 21 Playwork and Support staff responded to children's needs based on

sound knowledge and understanding of the Play process, guided by the Playwork Principles. 4 staff were able to undertake training under the Apprenticeship Programme, with 3 staff graduating the Higher Level Apprenticeship award. We were extremely proud that our staff are committed to continuous professional development.

