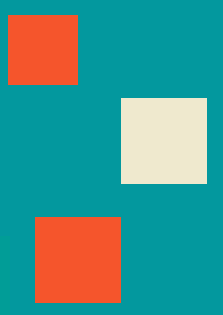


## MANCHESTER YMCA YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

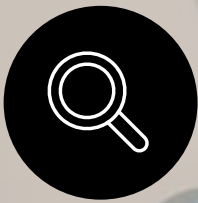
# ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022



# OUR MISSION AND AIMS

**“Through development of mind, body and spirit, we aim to provide a sense of belonging where people of all ages are inspired to achieve their full potential”**



## **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 voices.



## **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.



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# WELCOME

Like many other charities, we were hit very hard by the Covid pandemic. It certainly impacted negatively on our financial performance in the early months of this year but it also deepened our resolve to continue serving our community and we have become a more resilient organisation as a result.

We have been shaping our services to reflect the changing and continuing situation with Covid. This has required great flexibility and willingness to adjust to these changes. Our staff have demonstrated great tenacity during this period and have continued to deliver their very best despite these challenging circumstances.

Alongside our education and mental health programmes, we have expanded our services to include two new offers. The first is our Champions for Change project which is delivering social prescribing for people experiencing challenging health issues. As a Board we feel very passionate about this service as it meets a very important health need for those in the community who have struggled to adopt healthy routines and behaviours over a long period of time.

Our second offer introduced this year, has been to design and deliver specialist training in working with young people to people working in the sector. Our staff are particularly skilled in working effectively with young people who have behavioural issues and have been traumatised. This has also served as an opportunity to broaden our networks with other professionals.

I know the team is looking forward to continuing and growing our youth and community work in the year ahead. Of particular note this year is the expansion of our alternative education services into Manchester – as we have previously been registered in Trafford and Salford only. We are looking forward to that and to continuing the delivery of our other programmes. As always, we want to thank our funders who work with us to make this all happen.

**CAROL O'HARA**

**CHAIR OF TRUSTEES**



**We have been shaping our services to reflect the changing and continuing situation with Covid.**



**Our Youth and  
Community  
work is at the  
heart of  
everything we  
do at  
Manchester  
YMCA.**

Our Youth and Community work is at the heart of everything we do at Manchester YMCA. We work with people of all ages, but young people will always be a key target group and this year it has been really encouraging to see our trauma-based delivery model for alternative education having such a positive impact. This is an approach which the team has developed and is really working for the young people who come to us.

It has also been particularly pleasing to introduce our social prescribing project: Champions for Change. This initiative provides support to individuals to help them establish healthier lifestyles, improving physical and mental health, nutrition and wellbeing. It's a really diverse group helping adults of all ages and right across Manchester. It is also a project where we can make the most of what we offer in terms of our leisure facilities and our physical and mental health expertise. The results from the early stages are very encouraging and we are looking forward to see how this progresses – and how we can sustain it.

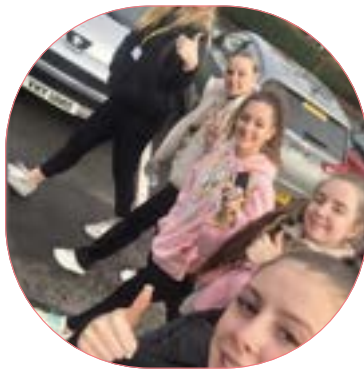
Next year will no doubt be difficult for a lot of people we support. The caring and individualised way that we provide our services will be more important than ever.

**PAUL SMITH  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
MANCHESTER YMCA**

# INTRODUCTION

## **Programmes of work over 2021-2022**

The following Youth and Community programmes of work have been delivered or developed by Manchester YMCA over the period April 2021 – March 2022:



**Mental Health Champions Project:** This is a collaboration with Salford Colleges and Salford University to co-produce and co-deliver a mental health campaign to young people. The campaigns serve to break the stigma related to mental health, raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and provide information on strategies and services which support mental health and wellbeing.

**Alternative Education:** This provision is crucial to vulnerable young people who require additional support to succeed in education and who otherwise would fall behind in their education. It includes young people who have experienced trauma. Our education offer enables them to compete on par with others, not only through gaining academically but also through becoming confident young people who can take their place in society.



**Adult Education:** Training has been developed for professionals working in high schools, in order to enable them to either deliver mental health initiatives or deliver trauma informed educational activities. This draws on our experience of delivering alternative education and experience of mental health and wellbeing.

**Champions for Change: Social Prescribing Project:** This is a new offer which we have developed. It supports people who are currently inactive to lead healthier lives.



# IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

**Our ethos and approach have informed the development and delivery of our programmes:**

Co-designing and co-producing work with young people and other partners.

Developing and strengthening partnerships to further our work and relations. We have maintained strong relationships with our educational partners, particularly Salford Colleges and Salford University. Through our Champions for Change Project, we have extended our connections to Be Well staff, part of the Big Life group.

We recognise the social context of people's lives, such as living in poverty, and the impact of trauma on lifestyle choices, self-care, in achieving, in having self-esteem and confidence, and in being resilient. For this purpose, we provide a trauma informed service, taking into account the trauma experienced by people when we engage with them in work to make changes or learn.

Drawing on current evidence and insights that we have gained from working with children and young people, and professionals.

***Our services had been restricted due to the Covid pandemic prior to September 2021. However, from September 2021 onwards we took steps to resume some face-to-face activity, whilst being mindful of having safety measures in place due to Covid. The colleges in particular were keen to resume face to face activity for their students.***



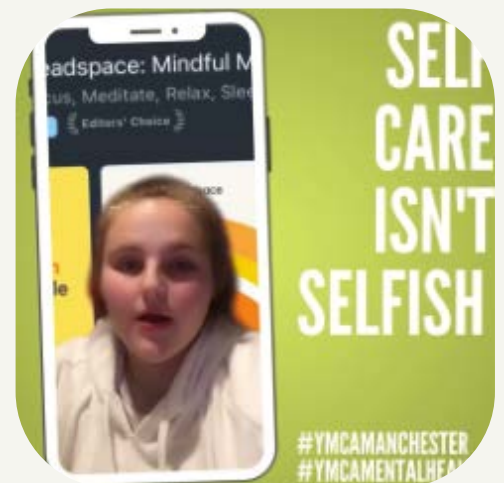


# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

An impact report is a way for organizations to communicate the issues they are trying to improve, as well as their strategy on how they facilitated change. It measures the impact that NFPs make in people's lives, focusing on their social or environmental outcomes, It isn't merely a description of the activities undertaken by the organization either, but it also provides the analysis on the results of these activities.

## MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS (MHC) PROJECT

- We have reached over 3,000 young people at the Salford Colleges,
- We have reached over 30,000 young people through our online platforms.
- We have delivered:
  - 12 mental health campaigns.
  - 44 new Mental Health Champions have enrolled in the MHC programme.
  - 4 mental health and wellbeing sessions for professionals
  - Over 500 online informal mental health discussions were delivered through message support via Instagram messaging.
- We secured grants from the Booth Charities and the National Lottery Awards for All for the continuation of the Mental Health Champions Project.



## CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROJECT

- We secured a grant from the Social Prescribing Development Fund to pilot a Champions for Change initiative for clients of the Be Well Service, part of the Big Life Group.
- Delivered Champions for Change programmes to 12 Be Well clients.







## ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

- 5 subjects contributing to Progress 8.
- Over 300 lessons delivered.
- 20 accredited units completed.
- 40 mental health and wellbeing sessions delivered.
- 30 enrichment days delivered.
- 80% students on target to achieve the qualifications they were entered for.
- 20% improvement in attendance.
- 80% of students were Looked After Children (LAC)
- 75% of students were Child in Need.
- 94% of students were registered disabled.
- This year we were also able to secure funding under the DCMS Youth Investment Fund to install two small classrooms into our main reception area to provide a high quality learning environment

## ADULT EDUCATION

- 4 training days “Restorative Practice in the classroom” delivered to professionals and students.



# 3. MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS (MHC) PROJECT

## 3.1 OVERVIEW

The Mental Health Champions (MHC) project aims to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and reduce the stigma of mental illness amongst young people (YP) through two ways: peer education and mental health campaign activity, involving young people who we recruit and train as Mental Health Champions.

The campaign activities have been co-designed and co-produced by the MHCs. They have been involved in shaping the strategic direction of the project and have been key in informing our response to the needs of young people during the Covid pandemic.

Our programme over this last year has targeted young people aged 11-25 who live and study in deprived communities mainly across Salford, including college and university students. Salford has seen an increase in hate crime since Covid, particularly in relation to race and sexuality.

The MHC project was predominantly online; we responded to the lockdown in March 2020 by setting up an online delivery of the project. As the Covid situation changed, from January 2022 face to face activity became possible; colleges were not having outside people coming in prior to this.

We have maintained relationships with Salford Colleges, particularly FutureSkills College and Eccles College. Our key partners have been:

- The Pastoral Teams within FutureSkills College, Eccles College and Pendleton College
- Salford University.

We were successful in securing £20k in total from Booth Charities and the National Lottery Awards for All. In addition, we attracted more funds through the interest of 7 Manchester YMCA Y Club members, part of the Outdoor Class. They participated in a fundraising event, the Yorkshire 3 Peaks Challenge on 17th July 2021, to raise funds for work of the Youth and Community Service. The funds raised were specifically for the Mental Health Champions Project because the members wanted to 'help the mental health of young people which has suffered greatly during the Pandemic'. They successfully completed the walk of 24 miles and raised over £3800, with gift aid.



## 3.2 WHAT WE DID

### RECRUITING OUR MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS

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- We partnered with three Salford Colleges to co-produce and co-deliver the MHC campaign: Pendleton, Eccles, and FutureSkills Colleges.
- We worked in partnership with the colleges to recruit and train young people as our Mental Health Champions. The MHCs were recruited through the pastoral teams within the colleges; they signed up young people with specific interests in mental health, as part of their college work, to contribute towards volunteering hours and/or as part of their DoE qualification.

### ONLINE OFFER

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We have maintained our online Mental Health Champions offer, through an Online Coordinator who has collaborated with the young people to create topics/themes which are impacting young people. A campaign plan has been developed from these ideas, which aims to raise awareness of the issue, being signed off by young people involved:

“I create a poster, PowerPoint and social media (SM) content planner (with daily ideas so young people can create SM posts). I then speak with our MHCs to get the campaign plan signed off (get an agreement that the campaign plan meets their approval). Once signed off by the young people, I send the campaign plan to the contact within the colleges’ and ask they distribute to their MHCs and more widely to colleagues so they can share with their form groups. In addition to this, I have direct contact, through YMCA Instagram messaging, with our most enthusiastic MHCs where I share updates and offer a pastoral service offering support and advice.”

The online community has:

- Provided access to wellbeing activities 5 days a week, e.g. mindfulness arts, interactive games, wellbeing strategies, and self-care activities.
- Provided informative posts, news bulletins, blogs and articles.
- Awarded 44 Mental Health Champion certificates to our volunteers.
- Created an eBook promotion, which was shared with our volunteers and on social media:

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAE9G3a8CXU/VXTPD1u0Irc6WPS5PIs2cg/watch?utm\\_content=DAE9G3a8CXU&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=publishsharelink](https://www.canva.com/design/DAE9G3a8CXU/VXTPD1u0Irc6WPS5PIs2cg/watch?utm_content=DAE9G3a8CXU&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink)

The link to our Instagram account is: <https://www.instagram.com/ymcamanchester/>

## SESSIONS DELIVERED TO YOUNG PEOPLE

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We delivered and evaluated various workshops to young people:

- Mindfulness drop-in workshops.
- Responding to requests for specific topics.

## MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS TRAINING

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This is evidence-based training which we deliver to young people, helping schools and colleges make the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils and staff a priority.

The training is designed to promote peer education and empower young people to engage in the mental health campaign and develop and deliver their own activities. We recognise that peer support in mental health, offers a unique insight and understanding that can only be gained through having been there yourself.

This course has been specifically developed to equip students with the learning and values necessary to utilise their own experiences to support others.

The course builds skills in:

- Developing mutually empowering relationships.
- Sharing personal voyages of recovery in a way that inspires hope.
- Offering help and support as an equal rather than as an expert.

When the Covid situation allowed, we delivered this training to young people in March 2022; 30 YP, aged 16-19, took part in this.



# MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS TRAINING

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## **Partnership development and signposting**

·As a result of our social media work on mental health and wellbeing issues:

-We have promoted access to the services of several other mental health providers through our posts.

-The Songbirds Collective, a project which is part of Songbirds Music UK, comprising YP from Salford and Manchester, which aims to showcase the creative talents of young people in Manchester and Salford and raise awareness of young peoples' experiences of Covid 19/lockdown creatively, across the arts and health community. They saw our online presence and got in touch to collaborate on a piece of work with our MHCs. We provided them with social media posts we had previously used from our MHCs, this consisted of a range of themes from several of the MHCs.

·An LGBTQ group at FutureSkills College asked for wellbeing sessions.



## **Staff training**

We trained the teaching staff to deliver mindfulness sessions to their students, as the colleges were not having outside people coming in to do any work prior to January 2022 because of Covid.



## **Purposive Evaluation**

We carried out purposive sampling across the three Salford Colleges in December 2021 and January 2022: an online questionnaire was designed and issued to 42 young people with a 50% response rate.

## 3.3 OUTCOMES

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### **MHCs engagement; their contribution**

44 MHCs were recruited and trained, including 2 with SEN; an 83% increase in expected MHCs. Throughout the year young people have contributed to the MHC campaign work in many different ways:

- Identifying areas of mental health which they feel need spotlighting; these young people were our steering group. These formed the campaign themes and were covered in the 3 colleges and online posts.
- Created social media posts which highlight the mental health areas identified; these young people were our content creators.
- The young people have been involved with this whole process.

### **Impact of the Mental Health Champion's Project on one young person Brief overview of the MHC**

X was 16 years old when they first engaged in the Mental Health Champions Project. They have carers responsibility for their parent and have mental health issues that are being treated by health services. X attends a college in Salford and has very few friends and support networks. X finds trust and building relationships difficult, which was amplified by the pandemic, as it cut their social circle down and impacted on their sense of isolation. It was during the pandemic and lockdown that one of X's friends tragically took their own life. As a result, this has made X want to help others so they would not feel as isolated and alone as X's friend did.

X chose Manchester YMCA Mental Health Champions project as the vehicle to support others and end the stigma attached to mental health.

Since becoming a Mental Health Champion, X has been involved in over 15 mental health campaigns, has co-delivered mental health training sessions to new recruits, and has been a representative for the MHC Project with other charities.

## How has YMCA Manchester helped?

X has said “YMCA Manchester has had a positive impact on my life. I feel supported, listened too and part of a community where I feel safe to be myself. Without this support, I don’t know where I would be. I still experience mental health challenges. However, due to the support of YMCA Manchester I am more equipped to manage it.”

## What does the future hold?

In the 15 months since X has been volunteering for Manchester YMCA, they have grown in confidence and now has a part-time job.

### What young people have said about the MHC Project:

“Working with YMCA Manchester over these 15 months, has helped shape the person I am.”

**“I have learnt more about mental health and how to support others.”**

**“My confidence has been improved.”**

“YMCA help young people address mental health issues, reduce the stigma and fight to make mental health mainstream.”

“I love YMCA as an organisation and I love what YMCA do for young people. You provide a positive and safe place for young people to discuss their feelings.”

**“I’ve joined a community.”**

**“I have learnt to manage my time better.”**

“I have developed my ICT skills and have gained influencer skills through creating posts for YMCA Manchester.”

“I have met other people and we have a strong community based on support.”

**“I can manage my mental health better.”**

- **What young people gained from mindfulness workshops?**

3 Mindfulness Workshops were delivered to 35 young people during December 2021 and January 2022 at Pendleton, Eccles and FutureSkills colleges. This was a ceramics class using, clay and paints. The feedback indicated 2 themes:

- **The value of doing an activity that is an immersive experience, thus promoting a sense of wellbeing.**

*“This was really therapeutic, I was really stressed and hyped up before I came in. It was very calming.”*

*“Enjoyed the texture of the objects, it felt really nice just to touch something and feel it.”*

- **The benefits of doing something different.**

*“Being with people and sitting down to do something different was nice.”*

*“Painting I really enjoyed it, it’s different from what I would normally do.”*



## **LGBTQ Identity and Wellbeing Workshop**

Two workshops were delivered to 15 students, aged 16 to 19, at FutureSkills College in February and March 2022.

The workshop explored identity within a wellbeing and mental health framework, using informal discussion, artwork, and walkabout. The aims were:

To create a sense of community and positivity.

To change negative stereotypes about gender and sexual orientation.

- 3 new Mental Health Champions were signed up as a result of these sessions.
- The images produced from these workshops will be used on the online mental health programme and the final e-booklet.
- The students shared their experience of LGBTQ identity:

they experience discrimination and prejudice. Some young people still have not come out to their parents and some have had negative experiences of coming out.

**80% had experienced bullying and harassment** as a result of being out at school or on the street.

Of that 80%, 80% felt that bullying, harassment, and negative stereotypes have detrimental impact on their mental health and sense of self.

**“Our identity does not cause mental health problems. Discrimination does!”**

**Young Person**

- They want to see:

**Improved mental health services for LGBT young people. Where mental health professionals understand the experiences of LGBTQ young people.**

**Hate crime challenged more rigorously.**

**More events like this.**

# 4. Alternative Education

## 4.1 OVERVIEW

1 Over the past twelve months we have had amazing success working with schools, colleges, and social care across Salford and Trafford, despite the challenges Covid and lockdown have thrown at us. We continued to be flexible and responsive whilst delivering a high-quality trauma informed educational offer. The Manchester YMCA Education team have been amazing, adapting well and skillfully whilst working both remotely and face to face with young people.

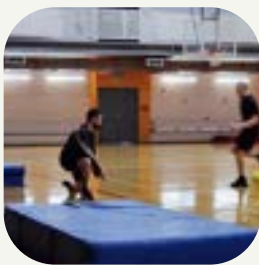


We are very proud of the way we have supported not only the young people who study with us, but parents, carers, and other professionals, in order to ensure that we deliver the best possible service. Working collaboratively with other professionals has been key to our success, ensuring that the student is central to everything we do.



## New Investments

To meet the growing need for our services we have extended our classroom facilities by building new classrooms and fitting them out as high quality teaching spaces. This was achieved with funding from the Youth Investment Fund (DCMS).



# Alternative Education

## 4.2 WHAT WE DID

We have seen an increase over the academic year in students being placed with us from Salford (why just Salford?). We have 14 students who collectively receive 18 days for education. For this purpose, we deliver:

- BTECs in Sports, English, Maths and enrichment programmes that add value to what the students are doing in mainstream education.
- Mental health sessions for those who are placed with us because of issues they are experiencing with their mental health.

Of the 14 young people with us we have 8 males and 5 females. 12 have a disability, 2 are on a Child in Need plan and 8 have free school meals.

## 4.3 OUTCOMES

Of the 14 young people with us:

- All students are on track to achieve their accreditation outcomes.
- 2 have produced mental health posts for the Mental Health Champions online offer.
- 12 will be returning in the next academic year.

### What People have said

We have received fantastic feedback from staff, carers and our students about how nurturing and supportive our offer has been, enabling them to achieve more than expected, both academically and personally.

“Learners have gained valuable life skills whilst taking part in the project at the Manchester YMCA. All of our young people have severe learning and physical disabilities and it is often difficult to work with organisations who have an understanding of complex needs. Nicole and her team have demonstrated a thorough understanding of our learners and have set a scheme of work which has without doubt enriched the lives of our young people.

Our learners rarely have the opportunity to engage in social activities with their peers, since attending the Manchester YMCA they have been able to access the community and build friendships and share mutual interests with their peers without the constraints of the curriculum.”

**Engagement & Pastoral Manager, Chatsworth Futures Specialist College**

“We continue to refer to Manchester YMCA because we know it will be a safe and supportive environment for our students.”

**Salford Commissioner**

# Alternative Education

The education delivered has had a positive impact, as reflected by the following comments.

## What students have said:

"I have achieved more in 6 months here than I have done over the last three years." Student aged 16

"This is the most English I have done in three years, I have never sat and done so much work." 14 years old student, predicted to not achieve.

"Being here has made me feel so much better about myself. I always leave feeling calm." 12 years old student, formerly LAC, placed for mental health issues.

## What parents have said:

"My son looks forward to going to the Manchester YMCA each week and comes back really excited to tell me what he has been doing."

"Going to the Manchester YMCA is the highlight of my daughter's week."

## What staff have said:

"The students and staff from Chatsworth look forward every week to coming here." Teacher, Chatsworth Futures Specialist School

"The work we do here contributes to the course work we do back at college. Working with YMCA has made such a difference to the students. The sessions are well planned and recorded with clear evidence for learning." Deputy Head Teacher, Chatsworth Futures Specialist School

"They always look happy but tired when they get back as they engage in lots of walking and physical activity whilst on placement" Class Tutor

"It is lovely to see all of the smiling faces when they arrive back from the Manchester YMCA and learners are excited to tell me about their day" – Class Tutor

"It is great to spend time with the learners outside of the classroom, it gives staff the opportunity to learn about their likes dislikes and interests outside of college" – Class Tutor

## What Managers say:

"Staff love going to the Manchester YMCA and are really complimentary about Nicole, her team and the environment and activities our learners are able to access. In addition to the learning opportunities provided by the project we also receive weekly detailed feedback and an evaluation of the day, including learning outcomes and photographs" T Holmes – Engagement & Pastoral Manager

"The Manchester YMCA provides ample opportunities for learners to achieve core targets and occasionally subject targets and enhances their learning" R Roche – Curriculum Manager



## Education case study:

### Brief overview of the client:



This student came to the YMCA in November 2021 after the school they were at felt that the student was unlikely to achieve any qualifications due to prolonged behavioural issues and truanting from lessons. There had been numerous cases of vandalism and aggression towards staff.

The student was referred to us for 3 days a week on recommendation from the school that they were at following previous successful placements with students from the school.

### How has YMCA Manchester helped?

Since joining the YMCA the student has enrolled in Functional Skills Maths and English, at Level 2 and Level 1 respectively and is also completing BTEC Level 1 Certificate in Sport and Active Leisure. Over the six months that the student has been involved at YMCA they have shown a great attitude to learning and will complete their qualifications this year ending in July.

The student has also become involved in the YMCA's Mental Health Champions initiative, making posts for the Instagram page.

Since joining the YMCA, the student has settled into a routine and built-up positive relationships with staff and students allowing there to be some mixing between students for the practical parts of the day. This has improved the student's mental health and their social skills.

The student has also started a part time job which they searched for and applied for through help from us at YMCA. They have continued to do this part time job 3 days a week for the past 2 months.

### What does the future hold?

From the student's time at the YMCA they have now been able to start looking at going to college in the next academic year, whilst also staying at the YMCA on a part time basis. The student has said that they "have done more work at the YMCA than they had done in the past 3 years at school".

# 5. Adult Education

## 5.1 OVERVIEW

We developed training to give an insight into our alternative education provision, particularly in relation to how we recognise and support the mental well-being needs of our students. The events were for Teachers, Social Workers, Post-16 Professionals and Commissioners.

The training covers the ethos that underpins our work, our educational offer, how we embed a trauma-informed method into our teaching practice, ways in which sports and creativity reduces stress and anxiety within an educational setting, educational bursaries available and referral routes.

The training offers the opportunity to learn about the following topics:

### Restorative practice in the classroom – Session 1

At Manchester YMCA we employ restorative practice in the work we do with all our students. This model encourages people to take responsibility for their actions, and repair any harm that they have caused. We have found it reduces behaviour problems, improves achievement levels, and develops emotional literacy.

In the session we will give a short summary of what restorative practice is, how it works, and what restorative approaches we have used and the results. There will be a question and answer time at the end of the session.

### Youth work and reflective practice and action learning in formal education settings - Session 2

Critical reflection can be described as an attitude and a reasoning process involving many intellectual skills with rationality at its core. It also involves essentially subjective characteristics such as independence, courage, empathy, integrity and perseverance. However, without action, it can be merely an intellectual exercise. At Manchester YMCA we employ an integrated approach where reflection and action come together to enable people to grow and be the best they can be.

We call this Action Learning; it alternates the doing with time for reflection. The doing leads to the outcomes. The reflection allows the doing to be more coherent and focused, and the learning that comes from the doing to be more conscious and effective. This approach is embedded in all our practice. This session will cover the principles that underpin the approach and give practical examples as to how to use it in the teacher's practice, along with opportunity to ask the practitioners questions.

# Adult Education

## 5.2 WHAT WE DID

The training was offered through a series of sessions throughout the academic year 2021-2022 to all the high schools in Salford.

- All the topics we offered were within the context of a trauma informed approach.
- For training delivered we asked for feedback about the sessions.

## 5.3 OUTCOMES

·A “Restorative practice in the classroom” session was delivered to 4 staff of Co-op Academy Walkden, comprising 3 teachers and 1 manager.

·The session was very well received as reflected by the following feedback:

*“Excellent communication and open dialogue throughout”*  
*“Opportunity to share ideas, ask questions and gain a greater understanding”.*

*“Excellent presentation with lots of key information, tips, and evidence which was beneficial and also a useful reminder”.*

*“Enabled reflection and understanding of what is working well in our school and Inclusion Centre and the areas of development”.*

*“All involved were knowledgeable and had a clear understanding and prior experience”.*

·We are now looking to find ways to carry this training forward.



# 6. CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE – SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROJECT

## 6.1 OVERVIEW

We developed training to give an insight into our alternative education provision, particularly in relation to how we recognise and support the mental well-being needs of our students. The events were for Teachers, Social Workers, Post-16 Professionals and Commissioners.

The training covers the ethos that underpins our work, our educational offer, how we embed a trauma-informed method into our teaching practice, ways in which sports and creativity reduces stress and anxiety within an educational setting, educational bursaries available and referral routes.

### **The training offers the opportunity to learn about the following topics:**

We have developed an exciting new offer, Champions for Change, a Social Prescribing Project, to support people who:

- Have weight issues, in making changes to achieve healthy weight, and/or
- Are experiencing mental health issues to improve their mental wellbeing/mood, through becoming more physically active and self-care.

### **The offer is made possible through two powerful assets we have at Manchester YMCA:**

- Our expertise in working successfully with people in making changes to their health and wellbeing, including to their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
- The extensive resources of the Y Club, our sports and leisure centre, which is the biggest in the city centre, and our on-site Personal Trainers.

### **The project offers a 10 weeks programme to each person with moderate level needs and 20 weeks to those with high level needs/requiring more intensive input. Each programme comprises 3 elements, depending on the individual:**

- Developing positive behaviour change through life coaching; emphasising developing self-care, building self-esteem and confidence, developing a growth and positive mind set, a “can do” attitude, making choices, accessing motivation for change, exploring issues/barriers/solutions, getting started and maintaining changes, setting goals.
- Tailored physical activity programme; increasing activity and reducing sedentary behaviour.
- Bespoke nutrition sessions; facilitating and empowering positive food choices in the process to lose weight and/or improve mood.



# CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE – SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROJECT

Our approach is psychologically focused and person centred in the following ways:



-Co-designing each programme with the individual.

-Taking account of the social context of someone's life, such as living in poverty, and the impact of adverse life experiences and trauma on lifestyle choices, food consumption, self-care, achieving, having self-esteem and confidence, and being resilient.

-Responding to psychological distress as it has arisen during the course of a programme.

We were successful in securing a grant from the Social Prescribing Development Fund, which is being administered by the Manchester Social Prescribing Service, part of the Big Life Group, to deliver this project as a pilot for one year to clients of their Be Well Service. The funded offer includes:

·Free full access to the YClub, for the duration of the programme to support more activity.

·A reduced-rate membership to the YClub for the remainder of the 12 months, offered after the programme to support the continuation of an active lifestyle.

·Review/evaluation of progress; carried out with them during the 10 weeks, to look at new insights gained, areas of growth and areas that need changing.

The Covid situation has had an impact on the delivery of the project. Staff and clients have at times had to self-isolate. However, we have worked very hard to be flexible in accommodating for these challenges.



# CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE – SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROJECT

## 6.2 WHAT WE DID

### We set up a client referral process.

- We held online promotional meetings, took part in a monthly Social Prescribing Fund Project's Showcase, and established links with the Be Well Service Managers, to inform potential referrers about the project and the referral process.
- For each programme, we have initially talked to referrals and carried out initial assessments.
- The project was initially only for clients of the Be Well Service, aged 18 years and over, however it became open to wider referrals, including self-referrals. We subsequently responded to a request from the Be Well Service to take younger referrals from their young people service, providing access then to those aged 16-17 years. This was possible as Manchester YMCA has extensive experience of working with young people.
- Although initially we were accepting clients with a BMI of 40 and under, the Manchester YMCA Board were keen to provide for clients who had a BMI over 40; we subsequently accommodated 1-2 clients with a BMI over 40 for each programme.
- We have offered far more than we were funded for, giving value for money:

-The Personal Trainers have offered 10 weekly sessions, in addition to the initial assessment, midway review, and end of programme evaluation.

-Psychological support: Personal Trainers have needed to respond to unexpected psychological distress from clients and offered support, e.g., someone breaking down emotionally during a session; taking time out to have conversations about mental wellbeing. They were able to manage because of their level of experience.

-The Manchester YMCA Board have been inspired to meet further the needs of people taking part. They have offered each client completing the programme another 10 weeks free use of the Y Club facilities after completion of their programme with the PT. This comes from a desire to support clients to continue to achieve their health goals.

- We have delivered 2 programmes of 10 weeks. 3 clients have been given 20 weeks.
- Out of 12 individuals, 8 females, 3 males, and 1 non-binary, aged 16-74 years, who have completed the programme, including one individual who is in the process of completing 20 sessions:

-75% are from black and minority ethnic communities; this includes 1 individual of white minority ethnicity.

-50% have a disability.

-33% are carers.

- A further 10 are in the process of completing their programmes. By the end of the project we will have delivered a 10-weeks or 20-weeks programme to about 36 people. The project should complete in October 2022

# CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE – SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROJECT

## 6.3 OUTCOMES

- Developed positive relationships with Be Well staff.
- Be Well staff have all been very supportive of the project and have let colleagues know. They have been very excited about the project and it has been describing as an excellent programme. Many have said that they would love the service for themselves.
- From the cohort of 12 individuals who have completed the programme:
  - 100% have made improvements to their physical health and mental health.
  - 92% lost weight during the programme.
  - 100% have learnt how to make use of the gym equipment, know which exercises to do, what constitutes a good workout.
  - 100% are committed to continue the lifestyle changes and new habits they've gained.
- The programme has been very well received by all those who have taken part as reflected by the feedback.

## What do clients say about the programme?

### **Improved mental health and wellbeing:**

"In a way this programme, it breaks the cycle, out of cycle of doom, helps you get out of that cycle. See every day as a positive outlook. Main benefit of this programme. A massive plus. As you progress, your training, seeing that it breaks up the day as well, breaks the cycle of depression and unwellness, has a ripple effect on the rest of the week. All those small differences help in the long-term wellbeing, makes you feel better, helps you to reduce anxiety, it does long term resilience." Male, 44 years old

### **Boosted confidence:**

"Released endorphins, not anxious about what people think. Before I went to the gym, always thinking people thinking bad things about people, like judging me. I know I'm doing the best to benefit myself. Freeing because I'm not chained to other people's perceptions of me." Female, 16 years old

### **Improved physical health:**

"Feel healthier and happier; was incredibly conscious about my weight, losing the weight and more active. Getting out of breath less when taking the stairs." Non-binary, 23 years old

### **Increased physical activity and mobility:**

"I feel proud I'm doing a lot more, being more proactive. I'll walk more. Getting up and moving. I'm a bit more confident than I was, I don't think when I first started, I was a bit shy of it and could I manage; learnt that I could do it". Female, 54 years old

### **Increased confidence going to the Y Club:**

"Before used to be scared of going to the gym, made me fall in love with going to the gym, not care about the time spent here. Comfortable and happy." Female, 42 years old



## CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE – SOCIAL PRESCRIBING PROJECT

### What do staff say about the programme?

“It is really exciting to be working with this client group, it is so different to my usual clients, I feel I can truly make a difference. After my initial session with Shamin and my client I had loads of new ideas how to approach this work.”  
Personal Trainer, Y Club

“Working as part of the Champions for Change programme has been a rewarding experience. During the initial assessments each client has identified different goals that they wanted to achieve. As we progress on the ten week programmes the clients then open up regarding past experiences and you do build a very strong rapport with each one.

It is very rewarding seeing a client create new behaviours in relation to their exercise goals but also in regard to their mental wellbeing. The confidence and knowledge a client gains over the programme are invaluable.

From a personal standpoint it is a very beneficial. I personally enjoy watching the clients attain their goals. After two to three weeks, you start to see small changes and it reinforces how important the programme is. I really enjoy the Champions for Change programme and seeing how the ten weeks does truly help an individual.” General Manager, Y Club



# 7. Conclusions

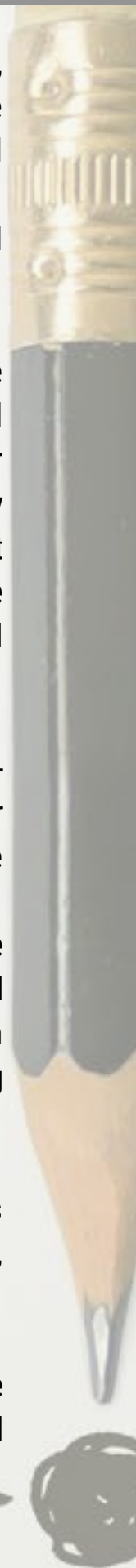
“Whilst this year has been tough for all, we have continued to grow our service, with the view it continues to develop from strength to strength. We have navigated our way through the changes with Covid, working closely with and responding to the requirements of our partners within this challenging situation. At all times we have maintained the focus on providing a quality service for all our clients.

Manchester YMCA is a crucial part of the infrastructure of support to people within Greater Manchester. Our services have reached individuals in need and have supported them to take the next steps to improve their quality of life. For young people in our charge they have started to take greater control of what they can achieve as mirrored by their increased level of engagement and enjoyment in educational and social activities. Individuals who have taken part in the Champions for Change Project have invariably gained in self-confidence and started making life enhancing choices for their wellbeing.


In all the work we do, with both adults and young people, we have seen the ever-increasing trend in poor mental health. For example, in the Champions for Change Project and our alternative education programmes, people are presenting with mental health issues that are negatively impacting on their lives. For the young people who come to study with us it has meant they were not able to attend education in mainstream or other alternative education settings and for our adults it has presented in ways that has impacted on their physical health and social interactions. As a result, we have adapted our staff training programmes and the offer, so we can continue to meet need.

We have discovered that students on our alternative education programmes have benefited from opportunities to explore their creativity and find their voice, as a result we have embedded this in an enrichment programme.

This is truly an affirmation of how much our services are needed in the community; we will apply our energies into maintaining and expanding this vital provision, with care and consideration of what matters to those we serve.



## 8. Next Steps

- Continue to work in collaboration with young people and our partners to co-design and co-produce our services.
  - Maintain our existing partnerships and develop new ones.
  - Extend our alternative education offer to Manchester High schools
  - Expand our academic offer to include BTEC qualifications in Personal Growth and Personal Development, explore qualifications in dance and creativity.
  - Expand our capacity to deliver the alternative education programme.
  - Formalise our enrichment programme and where possible accredit learning.
  - Embed the Mental Health Champions Project in the alternative education core curriculum and where possible accredit learning.
  - Develop a funding strategy for the Champions for Change Project.
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# 9. THE TEAM

The team which supported one or more of these projects comprised:

## **Alternative Education Team:**

Nicole Joseph, Head of Youth and Community Service

Gemma Sarsfield, Tutor

Dylan Gair, Tutor

Kaziah Barlow, Teaching Assistant

Darren Murray, Teaching Assistant

Jonah Mitchell, Teaching Assistant

## **Mental Health Team:**

Nicole Joseph, Head of Youth and Community Service

Michael Corneille, Marketing and Mental Health Champions Co-ordinator

Shamin Malik, Associate Mental Health Specialist

## **Social Prescribing Team:**

William McLarnon, General Manager, YClub

Melinda Boros, Assistant Manager, YClub

Reece Samuels, Personal Trainer, YClub

Mayeeshah Alam, Personal Trainer, YClub

Harry Harwood, Personal Trainer, YClub

Nathaniel Chucks, Personal Trainer, YClub



# YMCA MANCHESTER

