

YMCA North London
(YMCANL) Housing Society

Annual Report

2014/5

Foyer Life Academy

2014/5 was an exciting time at YMCANL, as we have continued to develop the Life Academy program within our service.

YMCANL's mission is to tackle youth homelessness in Haringey by transforming young people's lives so that every young person engaging in our service is given the best opportunity to live an independent life and to make a positive contribution to the local community and society. It is this focus that has driven the development of our Foyer Life Academy service to go beyond traditional services and to centre on investing in and developing the talents of every young person.

YMCANL's service provides an innovative, flexible framework within which each young person can flourish whatever their individual needs. It consists of an enhanced, holistic Support Package and Life Academy Program, offering a range of bespoke informal group and individual learning opportunities (Foyer Journey). These act as a platform for engagement that enable young people to develop the personal skills needed to make a transition from dependence to independence. The tools developed within the Foyer framework form a systematic and comprehensive means of tracking each young person's journey to independence.



Art Therapy



Photography



Jewellery Making

In 2013/14 the Life Academy programmes were launched and are continuing to grow and develop the young people of YMCANL. An overview of the life academy to date includes:

- Gardening at the local Queen's Wood to develop self-sufficiency skills
- Healthy Living and Fitness Training in our local Gym, addressing physical health
- Football at a local Community Centre, enabling young people to direct their emotions
- Well Being Champions, addressing mental health
- Music incorporating singing, lyric writing, rapping and music production helping young people express themselves
- Art Therapy, helping young people express themselves through creativity
- Talking Therapies, a free counselling service to discuss any issues
- Bubic, (Bringing Unity Back into the Community) addressing drug and alcohol misuse
- P.O.W (Protect our Women) explores forms of violence against women, AQA qualification
- Film and Documentary Making aiding inter personal skills
- Embrace, offering advice and guidance around sexual well being
- Theatre and Cinema trips encouraging young people to enjoy the arts
- Job Club and Work Fit, addressing ECDL, CV's, Employment, Training and Education Opportunities
- Photography, developing skills and personal perceptions
- Drama workshops, supporting young people to develop interactive skills
- Glamz, focusing on women's beauty aiding communication, personal care, assertiveness and respect
- FA Level 1 & 2 in Football Coaching with Tottenham Football Club, helping with employment opportunities
- Baking, learning to bake for yourself
- Basketball, encouraging healthy competitiveness
- K.I.T, Key Independence training helping to empower young people
- Camping Trips for males and females, encouraging interaction, team building skills and confidence
- Team Skills, team building activities
- Resident Meetings, encouraging residents to contribute to the service delivery
- Scrutiny Panel, giving young people a voice to create change

- Cooking with Confidence, teaching young people to cook healthy meals on a budget
- Discussion Groups, encouraging young people to express their opinions and value others
- Jewellery Making, enabling young people to explore design skills
- Swimming, encouraging exercise
- Fun Run, young people and staff fundraising for the YMCANL



Gardening



Camping



Therapy

Partnership Working

We also continued working closely with 3rd party agencies and organisations to further develop our Life Academy and our holistic person centred approach, these include:

- Haringey Mind – Mental health assessments, support and guidance
- Princes Trust – Offering various routes to work through practical training
- Wood Green Learning Centre – Provides ESOL, Numeracy and Literacy for young people
- MyBank – Provides money management and budgeting skills
- Safer Neighbourhoods team – A close link with the local police service
- Probation/Youth Offending Team – Supporting young people to address issues
- Connexions – providing advice and guidance for young people
- GP's – to ensure our young people are registered for health care
- Haringey Social Care Teams – providing support

Collaboration with Local Businesses

- Tottenham Football Club
- ArtHouse
- Crouch End Festival
- Accumul8 – Arts based Enterprise
- Haringey’s 50th Anniversary Celebration of becoming a London Borough – Accumul8 were the winners of the best Short Film 2015



Winners of best short film 2015

Next steps for the Life Academy

Our next step in enhancing the Life Academy even further is to embed the Talent Bank for our young people to access incentives to become independent and move on into the community.

The Life Academy will continue to grow and we have plans to work with many more people in the future. These include Havco (Volunteer Agency), Hail to Work (No profit tradesmen), Community Pay Back (Volunteers), Running Charity (promoting athletics) and NHS (Stop smoking). We are also planning on running more sessions around Women’s Rights, You and the Law, Cuisine on a budget, Upcycling fabrics and Creative Writing.

We will be changing the area surrounding the building is more visually attractive.

Young people will attend the Life Academy as part of their licence agreement and they will gain invaluable skills and experiences but they will also accumulate points, after which they will receive various incentives. Once they have acquired Life Academy points and incentives they will qualify to apply for the Talent Bank, which is funding for assistance with accessing work opportunities and resettlement.

Life Academy Support

We also offer volunteer and student social work placements (From Havco, Anglian Ruskin University and the Year Here Program), to help us to deliver the Life Academy and to generally help support the NLYMCA in its mission to make a lasting and positive contribution in the community and to all its service users.

Getting the Staffing right

In 2014/5 we evaluated our Foyer pilot with the aid of the Foyer Federation and Crewe YMCA, a centre of excellence in foyer provision. We considered how to structure ourselves to best deliver the ambitions we have for our young people and in the latter part of 2014/5 plans for a new specialist structure were approved.

Recruitment into this new staff structure is a priority for early 2015 and we expect to see great benefits for our services as we progress into 2015 and 2016.

Governance

We continue to be an organisation which is genuinely inspired by our vision and driven to deliver our mission.

Vision

YMCANL enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to our Christian values, we create supportive and energising communities that are open to all, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

We will develop integrated programmes that transform the lives of hundreds of homeless and disadvantaged young people across North London every year with the local community at the heart of this.

Mission

We transform young lives by creating places of belonging, support and inspiration

We are devoted to improving the spirit, health and wellbeing of young people and their families, by working with the local community and building sustainable services and social enterprises

We will be guided by our vision and mission statements in all that we do, seeking to transform young people's lives so that they can achieve their full potential.

Our values are very important to us and underpin all that we do

Values

The way we act at YMCANL is characterised by five strong and distinctive values that flow from our Christian ethos.

- 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'

Business Plan

We consulted with our Scrutiny Panel on our business plan priorities for the year and reported back on achievement against these priorities. They were ambitious but we achieved many of them.

- We were successful in winning 2 Housing Related Support contracts which has helped us to develop the Life Academy
- We created an activity hub for the Life Academy activities by taking 3 units out of management
- The partnership with Accumul8 continued and flourished
- The Learning centre was improved

- A stock condition survey was commissioned and a planned maintenance programme was put in place
- Our data protection policies and procedures were reviewed
- The maintenance service was reviewed
- Progress was made on improving communication with residents

There were some objectives which were not achieved. These were:-

- Increasing volunteering opportunities for residents
- Developing a social enterprise
- Increasing the laundry facilities
- Increasing access to move-on

These were very challenging objectives, especially against a backdrop of bidding for large contracts and completely restructuring the team. They are being reconsidered in the 2015/6 business planning process.

Keeping Families Together Project

Our Keeping Families Together Project came to an end in February 2015. This was a pilot project, funded by Haringey Council under the "One Borough One Future Fund" for 2 years.

The aim of the project was to support 16-24 year olds who were experiencing communication breakdown within their family causing them to be at risk of homelessness.

The pilot was successful in supporting families to keep them together. This meant that our element of the project, which was to temporarily place young people with "host families" was not utilised.

Our thanks go out to those families who put themselves forward to host young people during a crisis period for the family if required.

How did we do in 2014/5?

We are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency and aim to follow their guidance and meet their expectations. By following their guidance we will be observing good practice. The Homes and Communities Agency have laid down consumer service standards and ask that we look at our performance against those standards in our annual report.

Below is our self-assessment

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

We have continued to work strategically with residents in 2014/5 and our Scrutiny Panel has been a very effective voice. Senior Management has worked closely with the Scrutiny Panel, which continues to be very connected with our Board through the Chair, Jo Nash, who sits on our Board and acts as the resident champion.

The panel met 7 times in 2014/5. Membership has continued to be fluid because of the short term nature of our service but we have still been able to engage well on strategic matters.

During 2014/5 The Scrutiny Panel

- Contributed to the Business plan with the Life Academy being further developed as a result
- Reviewed the Resident's handbook with senior managers
- Reviewed arrangements for safety, security and safeguarding following a serious incident
- Contributed to the decision to upgrade the CCTV facilities
- Worked with staff on an approach to communication with residents
- Reviewed the data protection policy and procedure with senior managers
- Reviewed and shaped the chaplaincy
- Worked on the resident survey- meeting with residents to gather their views
- Reviewed catering arrangements

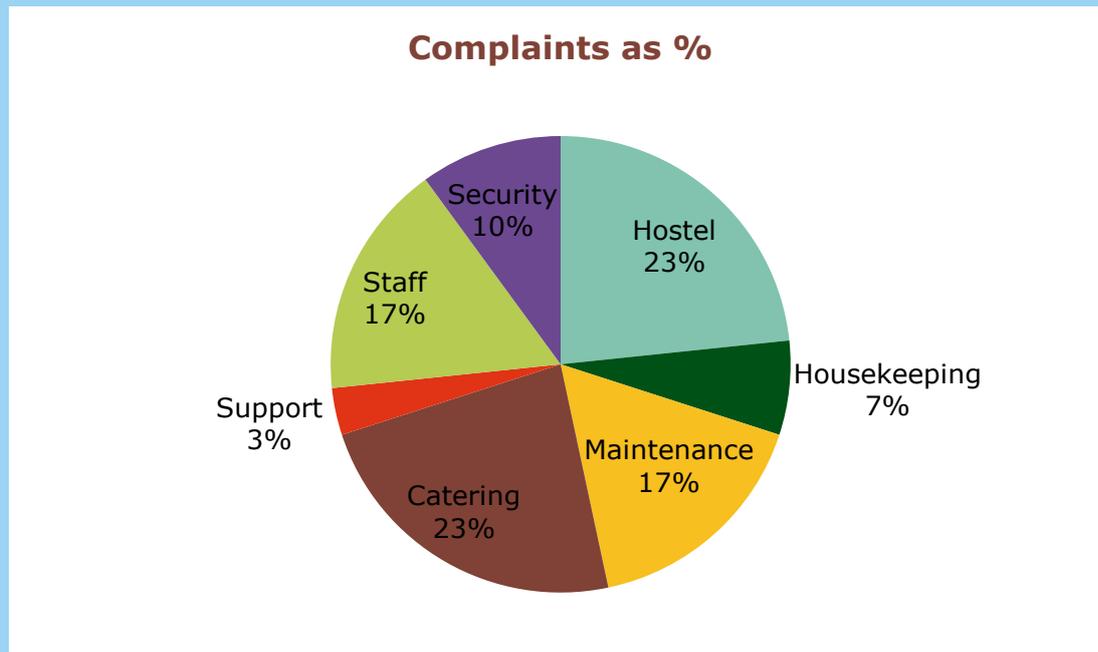
Resident meetings continued to take place approximately monthly in the hostel, where the following were debated

- The service charge calculations
- Visitor arrangements
- Activities for residents
- YMCA England came and conducted interviews and a survey
- Use of the Learning Centre
- Move- on
- Repairs to the wcs and showers

Complaints

We had 30 complaints in 2014/5.

Here is a table showing what we received complaints about. They were all resolved at stage 1.

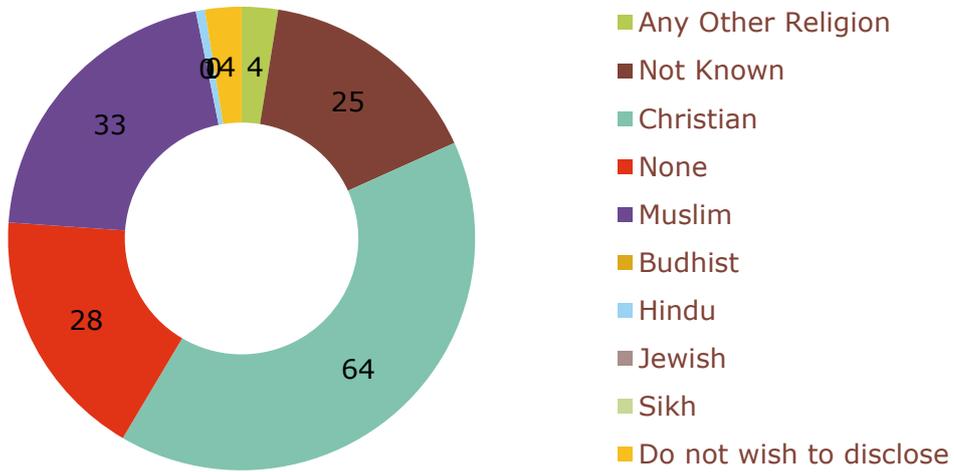


The number of complaints received was almost half the number in the previous year. We don't feel complacent about this and feel it could be as a result of throughput of residents and us needing to publicise the complaints procedure better and so that is something we aim to do in 2015/6.

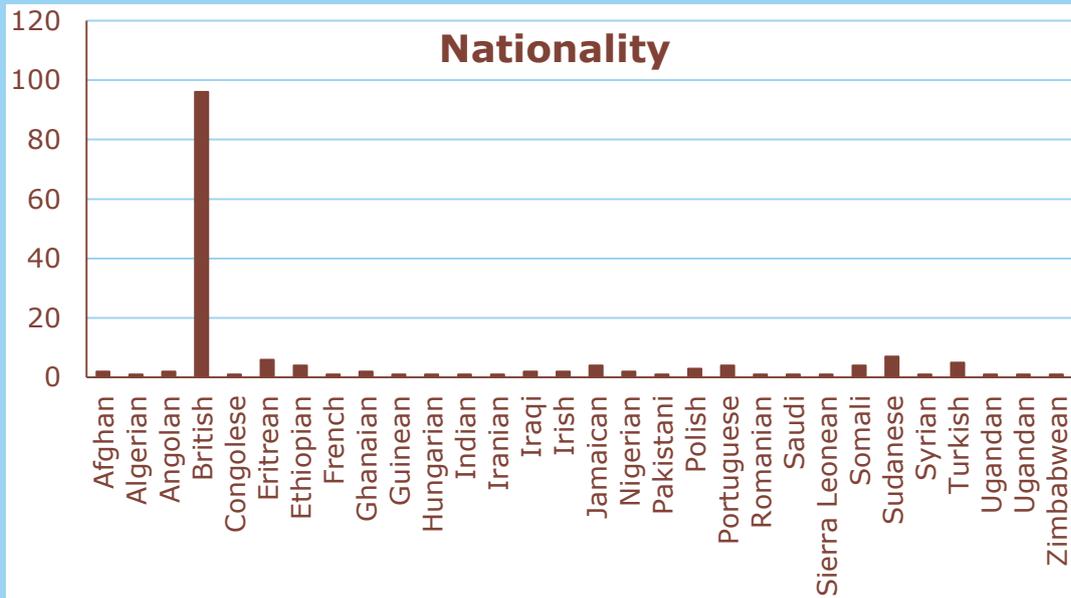
Information about our residents

We value the diversity of our residents who come from a variety of cultural, national faith and economic backgrounds.

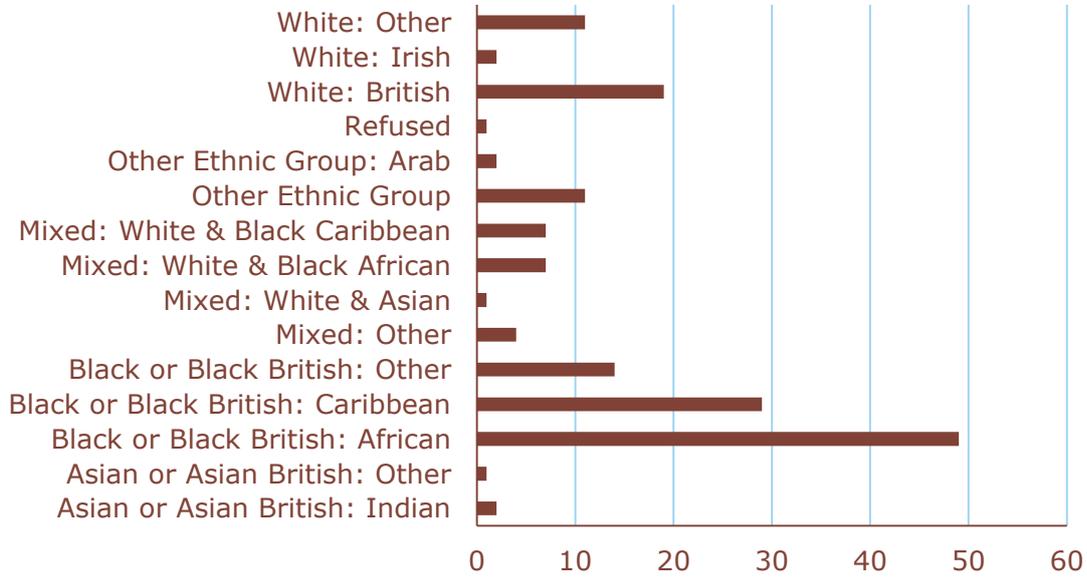
Religious Belief



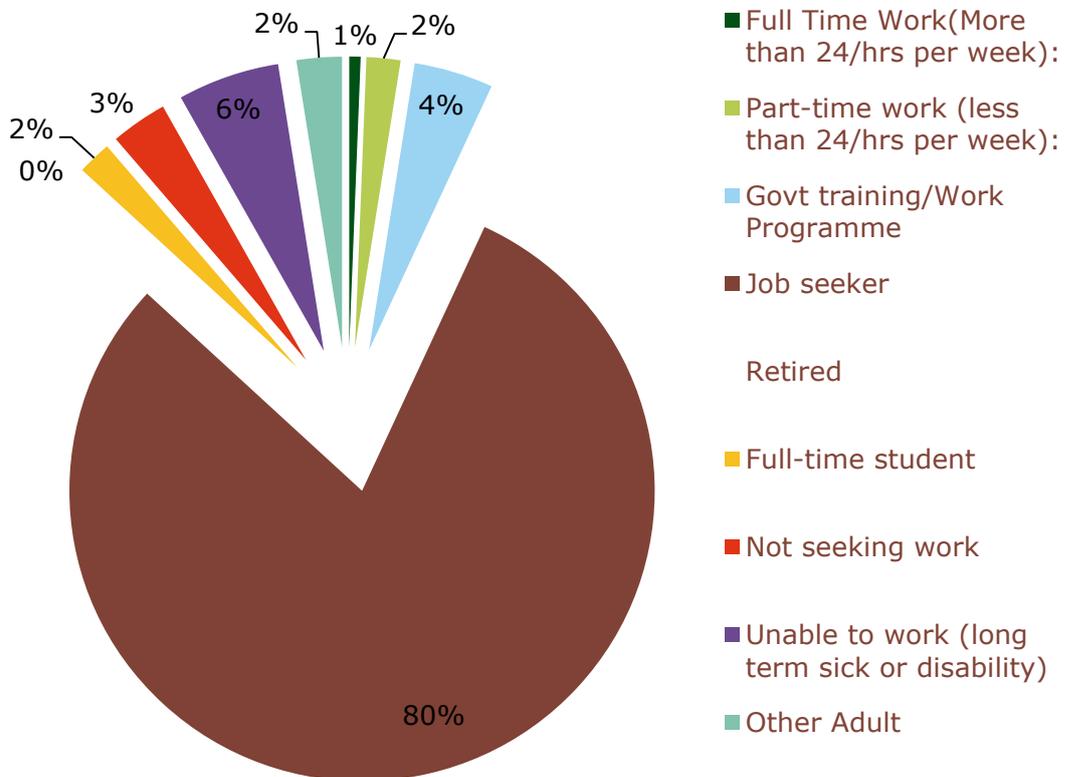
Nationality



Ethnic Group



Economic Status



The Home Standard

During 2014/5 a new Operations Manager was appointed and he oversees the repairs and maintenance service. He reviewed the staffing arrangements and set up a new structure, bringing in more trades expertise. This has enabled more works to be carried out in- house and urgent work to be easily prioritised.

During 2014/5 a 5 year premises plan was drafted and costed, setting priorities for planned maintenance and improvements in the hostel.

In addition a comprehensive planned, preventative programme has been set up which covers statutory and non- statutory requirements. It is a helpful addition to our monitoring arrangements.

The Operations Manager also reviewed our existing contractual arrangements and created an updated approved contractors list.

Due to our size it is not value for money to have our own in- house surveyors. Our ad-hoc arrangements have been reviewed and we have engaged Calford Seadon to be our sole provider for surveying.

In 2014/5 we remained compliant with the Decent Homes Standard in our hostel and in the move - on properties we own or manage.

Tenancy

We continue to have a good working relationship with colleagues at Haringey Council and in 2014/5 Haringey awarded us the Housing Related Support contract for their Foyer service in the borough.

In addition we entered into a partnership with St Mungo's Broadway Housing Association for another Housing Related Support contract and have been successful in that and are a sub-contractor for them for young people who are on the "Engaged and Planning" element of the Pathway.

We did not review our Referrals and Allocations Policies and procedures in 2014/5 but aim to do so in 2015/6, in line with our programme of review.

Although we made great strides forward in 2014/5 the lack of available and affordable accommodation for move on remains a big issue for our residents. A new post dedicated to move on solutions has been created for 15/16 to help open up options for move on.

Rent Standard

We have followed the Rent Standard and set our rents in compliance with it.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard

We aim to be a good neighbour and have worked to build relationships within our local community, which has been for the benefit of our residents as well as our neighbours. In 2015/6 we will be building on that and engaging in discussion with our Scrutiny Panel on a strategy.

Governance

We are aware of the amended Governance standard and will be carrying out a self-assessment against this standard in 2015/6.

We continue to have a very strong and active Board who govern YMCANL

Michael Baker - Chairman and member of Finance Audit and Risk Sub Committee - occupation - Banker

Virginia Ward - Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee - Chartered Accountant

Maurice Cheng - Member of Finance Audit and Risk Committee - Former Chief Executive of the Institute of Payroll Professionals and now with the British Osteopaths Association

Jo Nash - Chair of Scrutiny Panel - Career coach/outplacement consultant

Debbie Thomas-Corke - member of Scrutiny Panel - Supported Housing Professional

Andy Redfearn - South West London YMCA Development Director and Chair of the Development Working Group

Ed Salter - Environmental Health professional

Alan Elborough - an experienced Housing professional who is currently working on private sector solutions to housing homeless people.

Paul Tredwell - has his own company in PR/advertising/communications and has been very active in developing the new YMCA brand with YMCA England

Value for Money

Achieving Value for Money for our residents underpins all that we do. The desire to achieve value for money has underpinned our staff structure reviews in Operations and Housing in 2014/5.

We recognise that it is time to consider our strategy for Value for Money and this will be prioritised in 2015/6, starting with a discussion with our Scrutiny Panel and progressing to Board.

We have continued to build on relationships with partner organisations for the benefit of our residents, ensuring that they are able to access services which are free at the point of delivery, as detailed earlier in this report.

Performance

2014/5 saw our performance in void loss improve from 3.39% to 3.05%.

However, our arrears positioned worsened- the arrears as % debit increased to 6.1%. We have changed the way that we collate arrears by combining hostel performance with move on units so the figures published last year aren't directly comparable (4.5% for the hostel and 11.93% for move on properties).

Our discussions with other YMCAs indicate that there is an upward trend in arrears with our client group in London. We believe that the single biggest support need amongst our residents is getting them to financial independence and have therefore incorporated income recovery into the role of the Supported Housing Officer for 2015/6.