National Council of
YMCAs in Ireland

Annual Report 2024

ymca-ireland.net



Our value base is that every YMCA is a place of welcome, opportunity, wellbeing, peace & justice

Leadership Overview

It is a privilege to present the Annual Report for the YMCA Movement in Ireland in 2023/24, reflecting the collective efforts we have made to support young people, their families and communities to grow in body, mind & spirit. There is so much good work going on, part of our challenge is to measure the impact that this is having and to reflect this accurately and constructively.

Our YMCAs continue to engage with young people and families in 16 communities throughout Ireland, reaching 25,000 Children & young people.

In all of these communities we strive to create inclusive, safe spaces where everyone feels welcomed, accepted and inspired by social justice and peace for all.

We continue to focus on providing life enriching opportunities for young people, their families and communities. We seek to have an impact on youth development, healthy living, community engagement and a better world through our child care, youth work and community programmes. And nationally & internationally we seek to focus on global justice, climate change and international development.

A particular highlight of the year was a group of 10 young people, staff and volunteers attending the General Assembly of YMCA Europe at the end of May. The team were a credit to the Irish movement, heavily engaged in all the discussions on how we collaborate better and work together to fulfil the YMCA World Vision 2030 pillars of Community Wellbeing, Meaningful Work, Sustainable Planet & a Just World.

We have managed our resources well to ensure our finances are balanced and secure, and the financial statement gives a clear picture of our success in this area in the face of a cost of living crisis.



Our thanks to all our young people, members, volunteers, staff, funders & trustees for their support during the year and we look forward to 2025 being a year in which we further develop the work together and have a lasting impact on the children and young people in our communities.

Jonny Currie
National Chairperson

John Peacock
National Secretary

David Backhouse
Deputy National Secretary



YMCA Europe Secretary General, Juan Simoes Iglesias speaking at last year's Annual Gathering.



YMCA Londonderry host their Annual Community Christmas event in Drumahoe.



Empower 2 Transform starts recruitment for youth workers across Northern Ireland through local YMCAs and partners.



Greenhill YMCA welcomed students and staff from Vesterbølle Efterskole in partnership with KFUM og KFUK i Danmark.



Young people from the YMCA at the TMACC (Theatre Making and Citizenship Cork) Spring 2024 Performance in the Everyman.



Shane Martin speaking on 'Your Precious Life – How To Live It Well' at our Annual Training Conference at Greenhill.



Launching our National Wellbeing Strategy in YMCA Portadown at the beginning of Mental Health Awarenss Week.



YMCA Founder's Day celebrations on the 6th of June during the Global Youth Work event in Greenhill.



Young people celebrate a significant milestone at the YMCA STEP & Elevate graduation in Cork City Hall.



Lurgan & Portadown representing YMCA Ireland at the YMCA European Youth Representative Network (EYRN) in Spain.



YMCA Dublin celebrates their 175th anniversary with a Youth & Community Showcase event in Aungier Street.

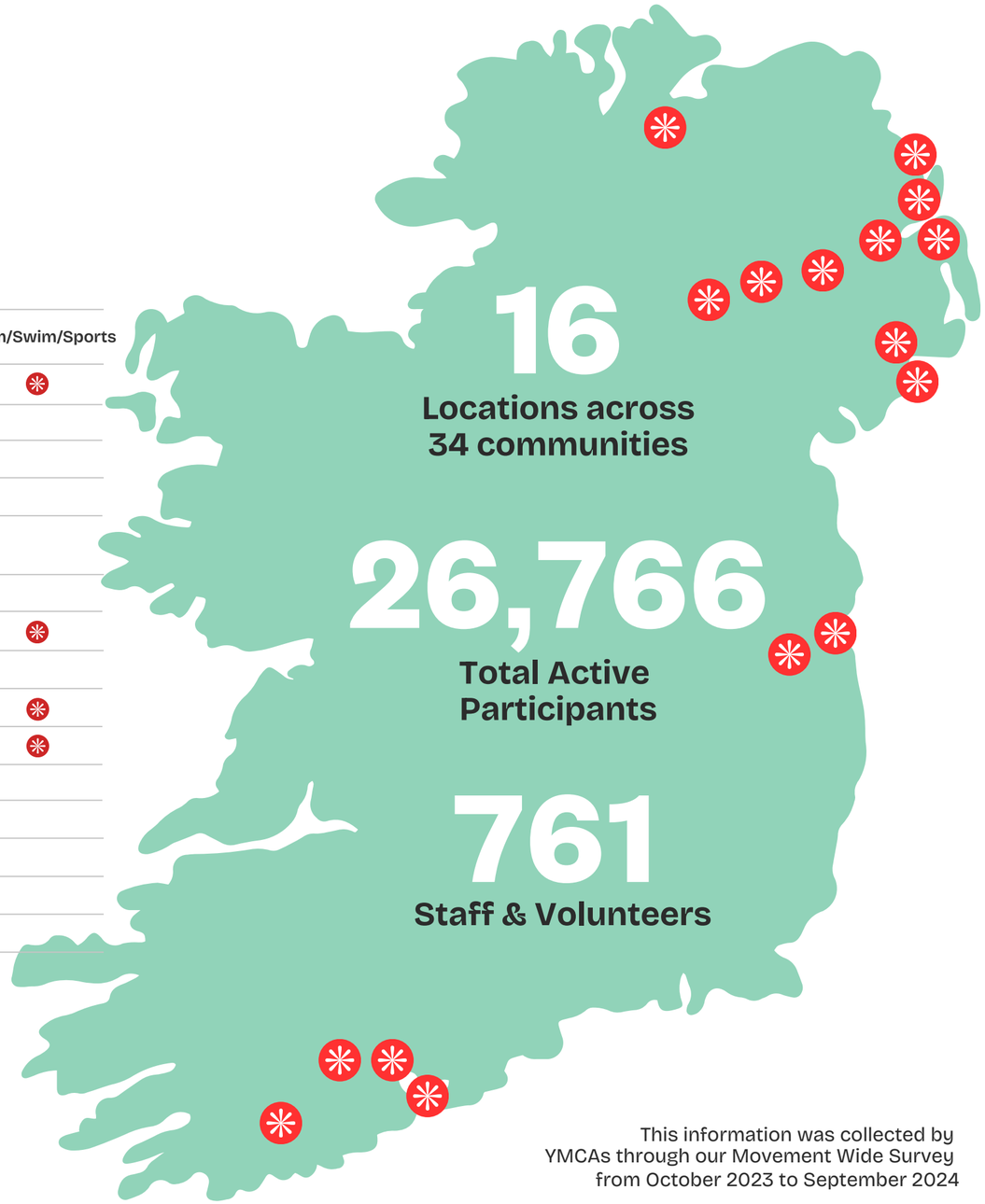


Young people from the YMCA in Cork host a fundraising event for East Jerusalem YMCA's Camp Hope.

The YMCA in Ireland

Reflecting the size & scale of YMCAs work across the island of Ireland

Location	Childcare & Family	Youth Vocation	Health	Youth Work	Youth Advocacy	Outdoor Learning	Community	Gym/Swim/Sports
Belfast	✳	✳		✳	✳	✳	✳	✳
Carrickfergus	✳	✳	✳	✳			✳	
Cork City		✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	
Cobh	✳	✳					✳	
Ballincollig & Blarney	✳							
West Cork		✳	✳	✳	✳			
Dublin	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	✳
West Dublin	✳			✳				
Greenhill					✳	✳	✳	✳
Larne	✳	✳		✳			✳	✳
Lisburn		✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	
Londonderry	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	
Lurgan		✳		✳	✳		✳	
Newcastle		✳		✳			✳	
North Down	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳		✳	
Portadown		✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	✳	



The YMCA in Ireland provides life enriching opportunities for young people, their families and communities through local associations and national programmes.

Visit **ymca-ireland.net/locations** to learn more

This information was collected by YMCAs through our Movement Wide Survey from October 2023 to September 2024



Every YMCA is a place of Welcome

Welcoming Newcomers at North Down

Wesal came from Syria through the United Nations scheme (VPRS) with her family (a husband and 4 kids).

The biggest challenge that she faced in Northern Ireland was being lonely, sad and away from family and friends. The language barrier was a huge obstacle which prevented her from communicating with people. Wesal felt depressed and frustrated and her mental health had an impact on her physical health, too. Sometimes she felt unable to walk and had to start taking antidepressants and pain killers for her persistent headache.

In addition to feeling isolated and lonely, Wesal suffered abuse from her husband. Her husband would insult her, beat her on a regular basis and also control her financially.

When Wesal came to Northern Ireland, she discovered that the women are valued and appreciated here, and enjoy the same rights as men. She came to the realisation that his treatment constituted domestic abuse.

Her key worker signposted her to the YMCA where she was told that they support Syrian refugees. She started attending English classes and a women's group at her local YMCA. She started feeling better, more comfortable and gained self confidence. She had the chance to meet other people and to engage in different activities like cooking, yoga classes and sewing which she likes most. She also received a lot of one to one support from YMCA Arabic Speaking Bilingual Advocacy Worker.

Wesal decided to separate from her husband. She feels strong, has her own money, a permanent home and her kids are living happily with her. She can sleep, eat well and can go out on her own without anybody controlling her. She is very thankful for the welcome she received at YMCA. She felt lost before and now she feels secure and supported.

Monika Ciok-Giertuga
YMCA North Down

*Names in this case study have been changed

Journeying through the years with West Dublin

We're Adrienne and Anthony and we have been involved in West Dublin YMCA's PAKT programme for the last 12 years and have recently been on a trip to the European Youth Workers Camp in Germany, which gave us the opportunity to learn about other YMCA's and their programmes, leadership development and climate action.

Since we were in Germany, we have brought back some of the learning to our local YMCA's and the young people participating, as we have begun working as volunteers in the PAKT groups.

Looking back on our journey through the years at YMCA, we were remembering with laughter the opportunities we had. Some of those that stand out were; having a safe place to gain confidence to go further in life - by going on family residentials and outings and meeting new people which helped us be more aware of what others might not have.

We loved the visits from Ten Sing Norway; the singing and dancing which led to Anthony joining Soulworks Music Immersion - this offered an opportunity to build confidence to go further with his music.

Adrienne recalls working with the Young Social Innovators and being interviewed on TV and finding that she enjoyed having her voice heard and felt assured she had an opinion that mattered.

"Opportunities don't come better than having a cup of tea with the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins..."

...shame there was no ham and cheese toastie!!! But we were allowed to pet the dogs, so we made an exception! Joking aside, "it was a real honour to meet our country's President and to know that West Dublin YMCA wanted me to be the one to represent them" - Anthony.

Every YMCA is a place of Opportunity

Another project that stands out when I look back, is the Zambia Project.

"It was how we got to meet people from a small village in Zambia and hear and see what they were doing in their everyday life, that helped me understand more about other cultures, I realised we're all wanting to smile and laugh with friends and family." - Adrienne

Anthony remembers feeling that he was struggling a bit at the start of his time in PAKT, he felt that drama would follow him everywhere, but being with staff in the YMCA supported him and he realised that there was more to life than being part of the drama.

Being involved in YMCA West Dublin, has always offered us a safe space, because we never once felt judged.

Our sense of humour was appreciated, friendships were formed - to the point we are all comfortable being around each other, no matter what anyone is going through. Sometimes it's ok to act the fool, because that's how you're feeling inside, but in the Y they will see you for who you really are.

Anthony McKeown & Adrienne Cummins
YMCA West Dublin

Every YMCA is a place of Opportunity

Anthony & Adrienne pictured with other young participants at the European Youth Worker's Camp in Michelstadt, Germany





Building stronger, healthier communities in Belfast

What began as an overgrown, disused plot at **Belfast YMCA** has blossomed into something far more meaningful than just a community garden. Under the careful stewardship of dedicated volunteers, this space has become a thriving ecosystem where wildlife, children, and community members all find their place.

“When we started, we were just a group of strangers with gardening tools and a vague plan,” reflects Clare Hutchinson, one of the garden’s founding volunteers. “Now, a year later, the neighborhood feels smaller and warmer somehow. I’m always bumping into friendly faces I’ve met through the community garden, and we’ve built genuine friendships that extend beyond that space.”

A focus on wildlife conservation, following organic practices and maintaining wild areas has attracted hundreds of species of plants and animals, creating their home in and around the site. This commitment to biodiversity has opened unique opportunities for environmental engagement, particularly among younger visitors.

“We’ve always been mindful that we share this space with our local wildlife and we do what we can to co-exist peacefully,”

Clare explains. “When little kids visit, they love to find worms and bugs. We even gave them their own designated digging area – it’s amazing how a simple hole in the ground can spark such joy and curiosity about nature.”

The garden hopes to evolve into a hub for intergenerational learning and community building, partnering with local schools to offer space for a gardening club and organise bulb-planting sessions with pupils. Its success reflects the strength of our community, where diverse skills come together, proving that everyone who wishes to contribute has a valuable role to play.

Every YMCA is a place of Wellbeing

The garden's success in promoting wellbeing stems from its inclusive, relaxed atmosphere and its dual focus on human and wildlife welfare. By creating an environment where conservation and community go hand in hand, it has fostered connections not just between neighbors, but between people and nature.

For many visitors, the garden offers a crucial space for mental restoration and stress relief, aligning perfectly with the YMCA's mission to support holistic wellbeing.

"I love how everyone brings something different to the garden," Clare shares. "Often it's our least green-thumbed members who provide invaluable help by bringing energy and good vibes - much needed on rainy days!"

"It's not always peaceful – you might hear children playing or football teams practicing nearby – it's a living, breathing part of our community where everyone is welcome, whether they're here to garden, learn, or simply enjoy the space."

This natural approach to community building has proven particularly effective at engaging young people, who are drawn to both the practical aspects of gardening and the wildlife that calls the space home. As the garden continues to grow, it stands as a testament to how nurturing our connection with nature can help build stronger, healthier communities.

Clare Hutchinson
Community Garden Volunteer
Belfast YMCA



Fostering peace and reconciliation in Lurgan

Every YMCA is a place of Peace & Justice



YMCA Lurgan is uniquely, yet strategically placed on an invisible interface in the centre of our town, creating a fantastic opportunity for us to positively impact and influence our local community, by fostering peace and reconciliation. The Empower 2 Transform programme has become an important element of this work, our cohort contains a diverse balance of religions and cultures from across our town.

Recently our young people came together to participate in a Good Relations residential at Greenhill YMCA, for many this was a big step and there was some nervousness amongst the participants. One of those who has been a part of the programme agreed to share her story;

“I am a 14 year old girl from North Lurgan, I live with my mum and dad, a big brother and 3 dogs. I was a Christened Catholic as a child, I love ballet, art, animals and hanging out with my friends.

Within YMCA Lurgan I have developed good friendships and have benefited from the support of the Youth Workers who have provided opportunities for me to grow and learn, develop important life skills and be trusted to help shape the direction of some of the programmes.

As part of Empower 2 Transform we have been exploring various programme aspects which will help us grow and develop as people and as a community, including Personal Development, Social Action Projects & Volunteering, as well as Good Relations & Peace Building. I enjoy being provided with a space to be creative and value being part of something bigger like E2T.

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I have particularly enjoyed getting involved in the volunteering opportunities, we recently partnered with local churches, and it was great to see everyone working together. We were able to serve the local community with projects like gardening for the elderly.

"I got a great sense of satisfaction, seeing everyone communicating with each other and working together to help others, despite our differences."

Just last week I went on a peace building residential with my group with the YMCA Lurgan team, on this trip we spent time with young people from a different religious background from myself. When arriving and unpacking I felt uneasy, but as we started to spend more time together I relaxed and began to observe that the leaders treat all the people from different backgrounds equally and respectfully during the programme.

Everyone was so approachable, supportive and encouraging, for us coming from different backgrounds there was no differences between us we were even all wearing the same hoodie. I really enjoyed this experience, I came away with a realisation that we were all the same, all equal, united as one"

Rebekah and Matthew
YMCA Lurgan

Empower 2 Transform is a regional partnership youth project with YMCA Ireland, Youth Link NI, Youth Initiatives and Mencap NI – Funded by PEACEPLUS through the Special EU Programmes
Body (SEUPB)



National Reports

We work to provide life enriching opportunities for young people, their families and communities.

Family Support



Celbridge Family Residential in Killary, Co.Galway

The Family Support Teams in both the Cork Region and West Dublin had a very busy but productive year.

In the Cork Region, the PAKT model of family support was changed to reflect the needs of our funder on the ground where more 1:1 child interventions were required and more staff participation in meitheals was expected. Weekly PAKT after school groups, regular parent support sessions and family events were continued too plus the annual summer project. The PAKT team showed great flexibility and tenacity as they took on this new challenge so quickly.

Cork Region & West Dublin

One parent highlight from this work in Cork was described as follows:- “This PAKT parent has had severe difficulties with mental illness and has been working really hard on her treatment while balancing motherhood as a lone parent. Social anxiety has stopped her from joining our family events but strongly encouraged by the PAKT family worker she attended the most recent one. With the family worker by her side, the parent got to see how happy her daughter is in PAKT and how well she gets on with her friends there.

The parent also really enjoyed chatting to the other leaders, parents and carers and the next day she sent a message to say that...

“The family event was the highlight of her year”.

Family Support continued

Another highlight in the Cork team was a visit by the PAKT youth group - “SLAY” to Greenhill where they explored ways to SLAY, encouraged and supported each other while trying so many new things and appreciated the incredible nature of the Mourne Mountains. This was for the first trip out of County Cork for one young person!

The West Dublin team have been busy all year running 11 weekly PAKT after school groups, weekly parent drop-ins, weekly ONE2ONE child mentoring sessions, Music Immersion (Soulworks) sessions, weekly parent mentoring sessions, regular family events, regular 18-24yr groups sessions and a summer project. The Integration of Ukrainian families into the PAKT community has been a real highlight where they were supported to engage and feel welcome in their new community.

Cork Region & West Dublin

As a result a family joined another PAKT group when they moved from the refugee hub! The first Celbridge residential happened this year. This brought great excitement as the whole PAKT family were offered a night away with their children doing fun activities in beautiful Killary harbour. This event provided a time and space for each family to enjoy their own company and to make family memories in a safe and beautiful environment away from home life. This residential also solidified relationships between PAKT families, PAKT young people and PAKT staff. One parent commented “ this is our family holiday this year”.

A staff highlight in Crumlin PAKT,was when a new 6-8yrs group was referred to by parents and teachers as a “nurture group” which is a great reflection of what PAKT is all about! Participation of the YMCA Soulworks choir in a Spirit FM broadcast was a real highlight for our young adults and music director as they were interviewed and sang live on air!

Norma Merrick
Family Support Team Leader



Cork PAKT SLAY Group in Greenhill, Newcastle

Youth Vocation

The Youth Vocation and Training Projects deliver effective services and programmes ensuring better outcomes for the young people, families and communities with whom we work.

The STEP project Cork City and Cobh provided high quality education and youth work to our students and this was hugely successful in 2024. The project ran smoothly at full capacity and it achieved the highest number of QQI modules at the highest level of delivery.

The ELEVATE project coordinator has ensured a programme that is supportive in the young person's recovery as well as the high quality delivery in the service she provides.

Cork City & Cork County

2024 was filled with a variety of engaging activities aimed at integrating Ukrainian youth into the local community through the "Integration Ukrainian Project" organised by YMCA. The variety of programs and activities offered not only enriched the lives of Ukrainian participants but also contributed to building a more inclusive and cohesive local community. The sports, cultural exchange, and community service initiatives were key to promoting mutual understanding and solidarity.

The YMCA has been selected to run the TYESI project on behalf of the DCEDIY. This is a 3 year contract, the YMCA had already rolled this project out successfully as RISE. This project has hit the ground running and is already exceeding expected targets for 2024.

Highlights of The Year

The Cork City STEP group collaborated with the Glucksman UCC on a film "we are here and we are free" the group won an award in the youth filmmaking category as part of The First Cut Film Festival.

The Graduation ceremony in the City Hall on 4th July. This was a very successful event with a large turn out of our students' friends and family. This event included attendance from the Lord Mayor Dan Boyle, YMCA National Secretary John Peacock, YMCA Vice chair Mair Kelly, Darragh McNamara and Keith Murphy CETB. The event was attended by management and staff as well as staff from YMCA NI.

196 QQI modules to the CETB submitted for STEP and ELEVATE students which is the highest number of modules achieved under the QA of CETB. The external authentication report was exceptional highlighting good practice in the Internal Verification process and in the overall delivery.

Youth Vocation continued

ELEVATE secured funding for a polytunnel and the group is now constructing the polytunnel as a team working project.

This is a very positive experience for the group as it allows those that are less academic showcase their strengths and gain confidence in their skills. The ELEVATE project hopes to make the allotment a core subject if funding for a horticulturist is approved in 2025.

Other 2024 Initiatives

Food poverty continues to be a big issue for the YMCA young people and the food initiative in STEP/ ELEVATE is making a huge impact on the young people's lives both in Cork City and Cobh.

Community Engagement in 2024 has continued where vocational projects are participating in their own local communities. Specific focus for the year was on the strategic goal taking steps toward sustaining the planet and global justice with practical initiatives implemented locally.

Overall Outcomes

The Youth Vocation department has met and addressed a diverse range of student needs through collaboration/ mentoring/ guiding and supporting improving overall mental health, confidence, self esteem and educational achievements.

Helen O'Shea
Youth Vocation Team Leader

Cork City & Cork County



YMCA Portadown

Portadown, Co Armagh

Throughout the 2023/24 delivery year, our youth projects had an outstanding impact through community-focused initiatives, bringing together young people, local partners, and volunteers to foster growth, engagement, and positive change. The commitment of our team and young members shone brightly as they contributed time, effort, and passion across multiple projects, leaving a lasting impact on our community.

Volunteer Engagement & Community Support

This year, the dedication of our youth members resulted in 2,287 volunteer hours across all programmes, demonstrating exceptional commitment to their communities. Young people organised and participated in 442 sessions, covering everything from educational workshops to community activism. Their volunteer spirit was evident in initiatives like the food bin drive, where members collected and donated supplies to the Craigavon Area Food Bank, offering vital support to families in need. Additionally, members raised £100 for a local toy appeal, helping to bring festive cheer to children over Christmas.

Events, Fundraising & National Recognition

This year, our youth programmes organised various events that fostered community engagement, and local pride. A highlight was the football match at Shamrock Park, which brought together young people, YMCA staff, and former members in a spirited game underscoring the power of community connection. Organised by young people as a fundraiser, the event raised funds for future youth initiatives and united young people and staff through a shared love of sport and “friendly” competition.

Our young people also showed commitment through other fundraising efforts. At the Community Big Breakfast event, £600 was raised, supporting initiatives that directly benefit our community. In a significant moment of national recognition, we were honoured with an invitation to Hillsborough Castle to meet the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, celebrating our members’ dedication to youth engagement and community service. This recognition reflects the impact of our organisation and the inspiring contributions of our young people.



YMCA Portadown Junior Summer Camp at Tullymore Forest Park

YMCA Portadown continued

Key Projects & Achievements

The Enable Youth Project, conducted in partnership with Craigavon Senior High School, supports young people's personal development and encourages them to be proactive community members. A total of 34 young people completed projects on mental and sexual health, anti-bullying, and community safety. Through partnerships with Common Youth, Invisible Traffic, and the Armed Forces, participants gained diverse perspectives and skills to navigate these vital topics.

Expanding School Partnerships

The Thrive Project is a schools-based programme in Killicomaine focusing on youth development, transitions, and key youth work themes, supporting young people through the critical phase of transitioning from primary to secondary education. Through Thrive, participants build confidence, resilience, and community engagement skills, creating a foundation for successful transitions.

ymcaportadown.com

This year also saw the expansion of our school partnerships, with our involvement now spanning primary, secondary, and senior education levels. Through a partnership with Millington Primary School, we now deliver targeted youth programmes to Year 6 and Year 7 pupils, helping them build confidence, communication skills, and positive peer relationships.

This partnership complements our work with Craigavon Senior High School and the Thrive Project at Killicomaine, allowing us to support young people at multiple stages of their educational journey and cater to their evolving developmental needs.

Summary & Moving Forward

It has been a year of transition and we would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of Nathan White and Gordon Woolsey to YMCA Portadown over the years. A real success is the quality of delivery and programming maintained throughout this period and the enthusiasm and resilience of our young people has shone through as a clear indication of the good targeted youth work of years gone by.

As we look forward to the upcoming year, we are committed to building on this success by expanding our partnerships, developing new programmes, and empowering young people to create meaningful, lasting change.

Matthew Matchett
Youth Work Manager
YMCA Portadown

YMCA Newcastle

Over the past year, Newcastle YMCA has made significant strides in promoting the personal, social, and leadership development of young people in our community. We have continuously worked to create a positive and supportive environment where young people can build confidence, acquire essential life skills, and become active contributors to their families and the wider community.

In addition to supporting personal growth, we have worked diligently to cultivate leadership skills among the young people in our programs. This year, we introduced a leadership training initiative designed to nurture the next generation of youth and community leaders, working towards YMCA's Vision 2030 Pillar of Meaningful future of work.

Newcastle, Co Down

This saw 20 young people aged 14 plus successfully trained and accredited in Leadership in youth work. This has not only allowed young people to develop confidence in their abilities, but it has also provided them with the opportunity to take on meaningful responsibilities. Many of our youth have been given the chance to lead peer groups and help organise community events. These experiences have enabled them to practise leadership in a safe, supportive environment, while simultaneously learning the value of service and responsibility.

Through these efforts, we have seen young people grow in their ability to lead with integrity, collaborate effectively, and inspire others. These skills are not only beneficial for the young people themselves but also for the community as they begin to take on more active roles within their families, schools, and local organisations.

"I have had many great opportunities through the YMCA Newcastle, I have already gained a number of accredited qualifications and was successful in achieving paid employment due to years as a junior volunteer in the youth centre. You are respected and valued, that makes a difference"

Adam aged 17, Assistant Youth Worker



YMCA Newcastle continued

Our youth programs focus on promoting self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and resilience, all of which are foundational to their personal development. Our centre has created numerous opportunities for young people to engage in team-based activities, from group discussions to collaborative projects, where they can practise communication, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. These experiences have been invaluable in helping young people navigate their social environments and build meaningful relationships.

Moreover, by integrating activities that focus on diversity, inclusion, and respect for others, we have created a space where young people can explore different perspectives and learn how to interact with people from various backgrounds. This has helped them become more empathetic and socially aware, better preparing them to contribute to society in positive ways.

newcastleymca.org

We have also established the implementation of the good relations ‘Empower 2 Transform’ project in Newcastle YMCA, with passionate and dedicated new leaders Donna Rea and Andy Hill. Both have made strong links and connections in the YMCA and beyond. They are committed to helping young people form positive relationships with others of different backgrounds, whilst equipping them with the skills, confidence, and vision to become agents of change.

As we look to the future, we want to acknowledge and thank Denise Malone, General Secretary of Newcastle YMCA, for her years of faithful and dedicated service. Her infectious enthusiasm, coupled with her genuine caring and compassion have helped shape a centre that is committed to empowering young people, strengthening families, and creating a more connected, resilient community for all. We wish her well in her new role in YMCA Dumfries.

Andrea Spence
Operations Director



Youth Spaces

We had another active and fun filled year in Youth Spaces in the Cork region. In 2024 we worked with 297 young people through our Cork City Youth Service and our Carbery Youth Service based in Clonakilty and serving Skibbereen and Dunmanway, ranging in age from 10-25 years old.

Some of the highlights of the year included the ongoing development of our youth leadership. 10 young people completed the Leaders in Training programme in Cork city and organised a fantastic Community Night in the YMCA over Easter to introduce over 100 young people to the YMCA. This was a response to the needs assessment they completed with their peers in Cork. The greatest need they identified was for young people to have access to a warm, inclusive and welcoming third space and a friendly and positive community to belong to. These young leaders are currently completing their Advanced Leaders in Training programme which further explores their own leadership approach, the YMCA as an international movement and the emerging issues facing young people today.

Another highlight was the development of Joy's Room and our sensory garden in Cork YMCA. These sensory spaces are regularly used by young people as a retreat to help them to feel more comfortable and manage sensory overload so that they are better supported to engage in our programmes.

Both Carbery Youth Service and Cork City Youth Service ran a broad range of popular summer programmes and activities including dance, art, theatre, music recording, production and performance, outdoor activities and trips. Both projects were well represented at the CETB Seó Youth Festival in Cork's Marina Market in May with 6 different acts performing on stage. The Theatre Making and Citizenship Cork project in collaboration with The Everyman had 3 very successful Spring, Summer and Autumn programmes with 3 beautiful performances at MTU Cork School of Music, The Everyman and Actors Vision.

We are continuing to develop our Homework Clubs for Newcomers in both Clonakilty and Cork City, providing food, conversational English and specific subject support as well as access to our Drop In service and fun youth work activities, which run throughout the year.

Youth Spaces continued

We had the privilege of hosting a fundraiser in Cork YMCA for Camp Hope in YMCA East Jerusalem in October, which raised €1,613.03. Camp Hope supports war-affected children and young people in Bethlehem, serving thousands of uprooted Palestinians by providing a holistic youth development programme and a safe haven for traumatised children. Our young leaders from Cork city and West Cork worked with the YMCA Youth Advocacy team to explore peace and justice issues in Gaza over a series of workshops and created a fundraiser which celebrated Palestinian culture through arts, music and food. We also had the opportunity to empathise with our brothers and sisters living across the world through an online hosted conversation with YMCA East Jerusalem and learnt about the powerful impact of Camp Hope on the lives of young people.

Cork City & Cork County

In the words of some of our participants...

"I've made friends, had fun and was able to be a part of something! ....."It has built up my social skills and helped me communicate better"....."It has helped to boost my confidence and improved my mood"...."I've met great people and broadened my horizons".

All of these highlights are built on the strong foundations of the daily, weekly, monthly and yearly support of young people by a fantastic team of dedicated youth workers who journey with young people through the good days and the bad.

Áine O'Callaghan
Youth Spaces Team Leader



Youth Advocacy

In 2024, YMCA Ireland achieved significant milestones in youth work, advocacy, and community engagement. A notable highlight was the Cork Youth Information Service receiving the ERYICA Quality Label, which recognised both YMCA Youth Information projects in West Cork and Cork at an advanced level.

Youth Democracy was a central theme throughout the year, coinciding with local, national, and European elections. Strategic partnerships remained a priority, driving collaborative youth work and social enterprise opportunities that promoted equality, diversity, sustainability, and human rights. These efforts included integrating Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into youth work programmes offered by all YMCA local associations in Ireland. The organisation also consolidated and influenced the role of Comhairle na nÓg within local strategies, structures, and organisations, while producing online YMCA youth information resources to be disseminated via social media.

Consciousness-raising activities were a key focus, creating safe spaces for open and respectful dialogue. These initiatives helped build confidence and critical thinking among participants as they explored social justice issues and sought solutions. One such activity was the facilitation of SDG 16-themed Global Youth Work activities as part of a fundraiser for East Jerusalem YMCA.

We continued to provide meaningful youth work opportunities, ensuring that its programmes aligned with its core values, celebrated diversity, included minority perspectives, and actively challenged discriminatory behaviour. This commitment was demonstrated through participation in the All-Island Youth Forum, facilitated by the Department of the Taoiseach, and the National Youth Assembly of Ireland, which addressed key issues like climate change, gender equality, and rural development

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We continued to provide meaningful youth work opportunities, ensuring that its programmes aligned with its core values, celebrated diversity, included minority perspectives, and actively challenged discriminatory behaviour.

This commitment was demonstrated through participation in the All-Island Youth Forum, facilitated by the Department of the Taoiseach, and the National Youth Assembly of Ireland, which addressed key issues like climate change, gender equality, and rural development.



YI staff host an exhibition stand at Cork ETB SÉO youth festival, Cork in May

Youth Advocacy Continued



Active Citizenship and Democracy workshops during European Youth Week

The organisation also supported young people in imagining and exploring more sustainable and equitable ways of living while addressing unjust power dynamics. GCE activities enabled young participants to engage with critical issues such as poverty, global inequality, health, education, climate change, and peace. Additional efforts included providing tailored information services, such as Active Citizenship and Democracy workshops, during European Youth Week.

Digital creativity was leveraged to amplify young voices and engage youth in strategic participation processes with policymakers and decision-makers. By supporting young people as Youth Reporters, YMCA empowered them to advocate for change through digital media platforms. This work included participation in the Pool of European Young Journalists programme, further showcasing YMCA's commitment to youth empowerment and visibility.

TJ Hourihan
Youth Advocacy Officer

YMCA Greenhill

This year, Greenhill YMCA furthered its mission of inclusivity and accessibility, introducing the YMCA Swim Academy to meet high local demand. We also received support from the RANK Foundation to establish a membership programme in the year ahead, which will broaden family access to our programmes and strengthen our community connections.

Our social enterprise activities continued successfully in Newcastle over the summer, complemented by new initiatives that expanded our reach. We focused on enhancing our social media presence and developing new merchandise, aiming to boost engagement and visibility within the community.

In outdoor education, our bushcraft programme has developed significantly, with new Outdoor Learning spaces created to make this activity more accessible. Bushcraft offers great opportunities for new experiences and deeper learning, with substantial potential to grow in the coming year.

Our commitment to accessible outdoor education also saw further support for individuals with severe physical needs, allowing them to benefit from our Outdoor Learning programmes. Additionally, we hosted a sector-wide conference on inclusivity in the outdoors, promoting dialogue and shared learning across the field.

Volunteers continued to play a vital role, with an increasingly diverse team contributing to our inclusive mission. Greenhill YMCA remains dedicated to creating opportunities for all, while growing and adapting to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Kenny Baxter
Greenhill Director

greenhill-ymca.org



Chaplaincy & Wellbeing

Wellbeing remains at the core of our organisational values. Over the past year, the Chaplaincy programme and creation of our well-being strategy has been a pivotal focus, aimed at fostering a supportive environment for both staff and service users. Through a collaborative approach, we have made substantial progress towards introducing well-being practices into our daily operations.

The YMCA Ireland Chaplaincy and Wellbeing Programme has achieved several key milestones, all under the objective of improving holistic wellbeing across our network.

Health & Wellbeing

Our initiatives reflect a commitment to fostering a resilient workforce, maintaining a healthy workplace, and to providing support to our personnel and communities, building on the foundation of our mission towards the flourishing of all people.

One of the programme's most significant accomplishments this year has been the establishment of the Wellbeing Strategy Group. This group, composed of eight dedicated members, collaborated to craft a comprehensive wellbeing strategy aimed at addressing the diverse wellness needs of our YMCA personnel and communities.

Following thorough discussions and strategic planning sessions, this strategy was officially ratified, providing a structured roadmap for promoting wellbeing. Next year, the group will expand to incorporate additional YMCA representatives, enabling broader, more localised implementation of the strategy across all associated YMCAs. This approach aims to bring the strategy to life on the ground, enhancing support in a way that aligns with the unique character and needs of each local association.

To further support and assess the wellbeing of our staff, we launched the first annual Staff Satisfaction Survey, a tool designed to gather insights into the wellbeing, satisfaction, and overall happiness of our personnel. This survey has already provided valuable information that will shape our ongoing wellbeing initiatives. By repeating this survey each year, we aim to monitor our progress, identify areas for improvement, and continue fostering a supportive, positive work environment.

The Chaplaincy programme has continued to grow, both in reach and in depth. Our Chaplaincy Coordinator has spent considerable time building relationships with local YMCAs, learning about the unique contexts and needs of each. This engagement has been invaluable in tailoring the chaplaincy programme's support to the particular challenges and opportunities in different areas. Additionally, securing funding for the programme's continuation over the next three years has provided a stable foundation for its ongoing development.

Chaplaincy & Wellbeing continued

While we celebrate this continuity, we also acknowledge the contributions of two valued volunteer chaplains who have recently moved on to pastures new. Laura Bell, formerly with YMCA Belfast, is relocating to the north coast of Ireland and therefore leaving the post of chaplain and board member at Belfast YMCA.

Evancia Aboussou has taken on a new job role in the Ballincollig area and will continue volunteering at Ballincollig PAKT. Both chaplains have left a lasting impact, and we are thankful for their dedication.

We are delighted that Merle Patterson has continued to serve as chaplain in Portadown YMCA. Merle recently worked alongside the team in Portadown to host a Prayer Breakfast and is making an impact in her local area by continuing to provide pastoral support.

In line with our goals to expand and sustain the chaplaincy's positive influence, we are pleased to announce the upcoming appointment of new volunteer chaplains in Lurgan, Carrickfergus, Greenhill, and Larne.

Recruitment will soon also be underway for a chaplain in YMCA Dublin. The recently concluded "Introduction to Chaplaincy" training has prepared a cohort of compassionate and dedicated volunteers, who are ready to contribute to the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the movement.

Their enthusiasm and commitment are an indicator of the programme's strength and the positive impact it will continue to have on our YMCA communities.

Alex Bartholomew
Chaplaincy Coordinator

Download our Wellbeing Strategy



Empower 2 Transform

The PEACEPLUS programme is an important and strategic investment that seeks to protect and preserve the hard-won peace and provide opportunities for building prosperity in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

YMCA were delighted to be informed in late 2023 that our bid to deliver the Empower 2 Transform Programme, as the lead partner had been successful. The award of 7.7 million euros was not only an important financial investment into youth work across the regions, but the programme at its heart had a strong sense of partnership and collaboration between all of the YMCA associations in Northern Ireland and project partners such as Youth Link, Youth Initiatives and Mencap between now and the end of 2027.

The project seeks to empower youth by developing confidence, enhancing skills, and promoting positive interactions between participants of diverse backgrounds. This approach not only benefits the young individuals but also strengthens community bonds and contributes to a more peaceful society.

Since then we have recruited 18 youth workers and a management and support team within YMCA, along with complimentary teams across the partnership totalling 40 people.

Last month the youth team from across the Empower 2 Transform project gathered for a two day Good Relations training event in Greenhill YMCA to explore the key themes and Good Relations and Peace Building. It was a great opportunity for the team to share knowledge, experiences and areas of good practice of peace building work across Northern Ireland and beyond.

The majority of our cohorts across Northern Ireland and The Border Counties are now actively delivering face to face programmes for young people aged 14-25, with currently 307 participants engaging in the project and a total of 874 sessions have been delivered across 16 different locations.

The needs of the young people vary from town to town and whilst programmes follow the key pillars of Good Relations, Employability, Citizenship and Personal Development, opportunity has arisen for bespoke and personalised interventions to ensure the needs of the young people are met.

empower2transform.org

A number of OCN's are currently being delivered by our teams on subjects like Diversity & Good Relations and Personal Success & Wellbeing, there has been participation in Educational Visits, Employability Workshops, Social Action Projects and Volunteering, but crucially through this, we are witnessing the confidence of young people being enhanced, the relationships between diverse people groups, develop, grow and flourish as together they positively contribute to society.

Andrew McCreery
E2T Coordinator



Management & Support

YMCA Ireland continues to play a vital role in supporting local associations and enhancing the collective impact of the YMCA movement across the island. By providing strategic guidance, training, resources, and advocacy, YMCA Ireland is empowering local YMCAs to achieve their mission more effectively and strengthen the movement's presence and influence within communities

Capacity Building & Training

This year YMCA Ireland have offered targeted training programmes and resources to help local associations build the skills and capacities needed to meet community needs. These training opportunities spanned various areas, including youth work, leadership, and safeguarding. By equipping local teams with relevant knowledge and skills, YMCA Ireland has supported them to deliver high-quality programmes and address emerging issues with confidence.

Advocacy & Policy Influence

Recognising the power of a unified voice, YMCA Ireland has advocated on behalf of YMCA at regional and national levels, addressing key issues affecting young people, families, and communities. By engaging with government bodies, policy makers, and partner organisations, YMCA Ireland is championing causes central to YMCA's mission, such as youth empowerment, social inclusion, and mental health. This advocacy work amplifies the concerns and needs of local communities and positions YMCA as a leading voice in social change.

Networking & Collaboration

YMCA Ireland continues to foster strong connections among local YMCAs, facilitating collaboration, sharing best practices, and mutual support. Through the annual gathering, working groups, and digital platforms, YMCA Ireland has been creating opportunities for local associations to learn from one another, align on shared goals, and collaborate on larger initiatives such as the E2T good relations programme. This network strengthens the YMCA's collective impact and encourages innovation across regions.

Development of Programmes & Strategic Initiatives

This year, YMCA Ireland made significant progress towards our national strategic objectives, facilitating collaborative initiatives across the movement in the areas of Wellness, Workforce Development, Welcoming Newcomers, Communications, Business Development, Development Education, International Partnerships, Governance, and more.



Management & Support continued

Staff Team

We also bid a heartfelt farewell to two exceptional team members who have played pivotal roles in shaping our organisation: Geraldine Stinton, our Personnel and Policy Officer, and Gillian McClay, our Training & Development Officer.

As Personnel and Policy Officer, Geraldine has been the cornerstone of our team's well-being and development for 5 years but she worked for YMCA in different roles for over 35 years. Her compassionate leadership, dedication to equity, and tireless efforts to support staff have been instrumental in building the inclusive and thriving workplace we cherish today.

Training & Development Officer, Gillian has spent 10 years empowering staff, volunteers, and service users with knowledge and skills that have left a lasting impact across the organization. Geraldine and Gillian's commitment to fostering growth and excellence has been truly inspiring.

While we are sad to see them go, we celebrate their incredible contributions and wish them well in their new adventures going forward. Thank you, Geraldine and Gillian, for your years of service and the legacy you leave behind.

We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to Denise Malone (General Secretary, Newcastle YMCA) and Gordon Woolsey (General Secretary, Portadown YMCA) for their valued contribution to YMCA Ireland. Both have moved on to exciting new projects and we wish them every happiness and success for the future. You will always be a part of the YMCA family!

YMCA Ireland is also thrilled to have welcomed its new Operations Director, Andrea Spence, in September 2024. She will play a pivotal role in supporting local associations across Ireland. Andrea will oversee key areas such as policy development, personnel management, and strategic leadership

A core part of Andrea's approach will be building strong, collaborative relationships with local teams, fostering a unified vision and empowering staff to deliver impactful programmes that align with YMCA's mission.

Another exciting appointment is our new Training and Development Officer, Aoileann Glenn, who joined us in November 2024. Aoileann will focus on enhancing staff knowledge and skills by providing a suite of training and learning opportunities to promote best practice, and encourage shared learning.

These appointments mark an exciting new chapter for YMCA Ireland, driving positive change and ensuring sustainable growth across the network.

Andrea Spence
Operations Director

Management & Support

Business Development

This year, a key focus has been on identifying diverse income streams. To effectively uncover those opportunities, we required a strategy to clarify our unique selling proposition (USP), conduct a SWOT analysis and define our brand as a National organisation

We have developed a National Fundraising strategy, aligning with our strategic goals. This initiative derives from understanding the organisation's culture and local needs.

The five-part strategy enables us to delve into various aspects, including digital fundraising, social enterprise, and more. To support this we have introduced a new donation platform that has demonstrated both cost-effectiveness and efficiency in collecting contributions.

Business Development

As we look to the future, our goal is to initiate new campaigns, engage new funders, strengthen local partnerships, and enhance international collaborations.

In order to ensure the success of our efforts, it is imperative that we continue to strengthen our brand with clarity and purpose and effectively communicate our impact, as this will be crucial in attracting support and fostering partnerships. We are actively seeking collaborations with a diverse range of businesses and are making noteworthy progress in our partnerships with YMCA England/Wales and YMCA Scotland.

Additionally, we are enhancing our fundraising efforts by partnering with other charities and organisations to create joint fundraising initiatives.

The establishment of a new Fundraising Working Group in the forthcoming quarter, will facilitate the expansion of our initiatives, positioning us for significant growth and development at a Local and National level.

Natasha McReynolds-Nicholl
Business Development Officer





Communications

As one of our strategic priorities, we have worked to strengthen and develop our national communications over the past year with increasing collaboration and knowledge sharing among YMCAs across Ireland and beyond.

In line with our Communications Strategy to promote the YMCA's image and values both internally and externally, we have undertaken several key communication activities, such as the development of local association websites and support for both local and national events and campaigns.

Communications

This is most evident in relation to our impact; having represented our national movement through involvement with the Measuring Impact for Youth Organisations (MIYO) project of European Alliance of YMCAs and the Vision 2030 Learning, Innovation & Impact function of World Alliance of YMCAs.

Through this work we have begun to strategically develop our own shared impact framework through the national Impact Working Group and have made significant progress towards the YMCA being an impactful and impact-led movement on a local, national and global level.

Ian McKenzie
Communications Officer

We would like to acknowledge the support of our funders and donors

ea Education Authority

An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Comhairle na nÓg
Young Voices. Local Issues.

SOLAS learning works

cetb
Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chorcaí
Cork Education and Training Board

Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

CLDATF
Cork Local Drug & Alcohol Task Force

ddletb
Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dublin and Dún Laoghaire
Átha Cliath agus Dhún Laoghaire Education and Training Board

TUSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

COMMUNITY FUND

YOUTH INFORMATION

HSE

Department for Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

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County Down Rural Community Network

léargas

Rank Foundation

BENEFACT TRUST

Irish Aid
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

PEACEPLUS
Northern Ireland - Ireland
Co-funded by the European Union | UK Government

Financial Report (NI)

Period March 2023 - March 2024

Total Income	£1,707,254			
Total Expenditure	£2,069,914			
Deficit of	(£362,660)			
Depreciation	£172,196			
Reserves	**2024**	**2023**	**Difference**	
Unrestricted Reserves	£553,024	£706 803	(£153,779)	
Designated Reserves	£112,589	£138,010	(£25,421)	
Restricted Reserves	£3,195,567	£3,379,027	(£183,460)	
Total	£3,861,180	£4,223,840	(£362,660)	Includes (£172,196) Depreciation

Financial Report (ROI)

Period January 2023 - December 2023

Total Income	€1,878,110			
Total Expenditure	€1,901,388			
Deficit of	(€23,278)			
Depreciation	€15,366			
Reserves	**2023**	**2022**	**Difference**	
Unrestricted Reserves	€252,309	€253,226	(€917)	
Designated Reserves	€98,168	€98,168	€0	
Capital & Revaluation Reserves	€685,954	€699,954	(€14,000)	
Restricted Reserves	€77,832	€86,194	(€8,362)	
Total	€1,114,263	€1,137,542	(€23,279)	Includes (€15,366) Depreciation

Governance

Names of Directors of National Council of YMCAs of Ireland Ltd for 2023/24:
J Currie, G Kirk, L Dunn, M. Kelly,
J Irwin, D Wiggins, L. Boyd, K. Graham, A. Lasso, D. Nutt,
C. Cupples, L. Somers, M. Taylor

Incorporating The National Council of Ireland YMCA (RoI) CLG for 2023:
J. Currie, M. Kelly, C. Meikle, R. Willoughby, D. Backhouse

No of National Executive Meetings held in 2023/24 : 7
Date of 2024 AGM : November 30th, 2024

Registered Address of National Council of YMCAs of Ireland Ltd
National Centre Greenhill YMCA
Donard Park
Newcastle
BT33 0GR

Company No NI 15660
HMRC Charitable Tax Ref.: XN45820
Charity Registration Number NIC105739

Registered Address of The National Council of Ireland YMCA (ROI) CLG
11/12 Marlboro Street
Cork City
Cork
T12 HN4V
Charity Registration Number 20001124
Revenue Charity Number CHY728

Auditors for National Council of YMCAs of Ireland Ltd
& National Council of Ireland YMCA (RoI) CLG:
AAB Group Accountants Ltd
1-3 Arthur Street
Belfast
Co Antrim
BT1 4GA

YMCA Ireland TCAN: 313282
Tax Registration Number: 8234018T

YMCA Ireland is signatory of the Dochas Code of Conduct on Images & Messages
YMCA Ireland is compliant with the Governance Code