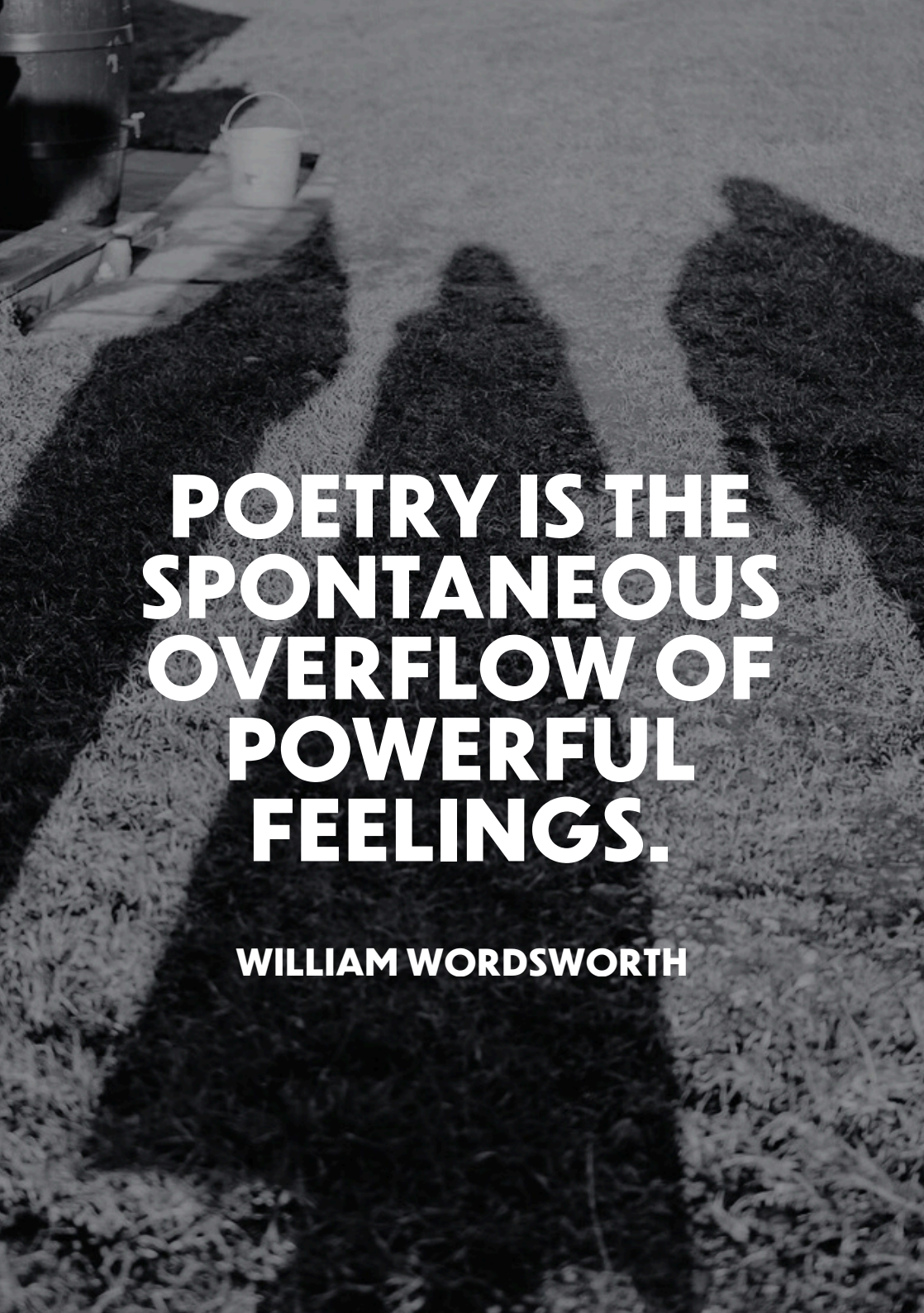


180

**A COLLECTION OF POEMS
WRITTEN BY THE PEOPLE WE
WORK ALONGSIDE.**

YOU · MATTER

HOPE + HOMES SINCE 1846

A black and white photograph of a dirt path with several footprints. In the upper left, there is a large metal container and a white bucket. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**POETRY IS THE
SPONTANEOUS
OVERFLOW OF
POWERFUL
FEELINGS.**

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

WELCOME

2026 marks our 180th year working alongside our communities.

To commemorate our birthday we asked the people we support and our teams to write a poem about what the organisation means to them.

This book charts our history and celebrates the amazing talent of the people we work alongside.

YOU · MATTER

LIFE

Elaborate confusion of colours and
themes of living movement.

Moments of love and desire and
sprinklings of contempt and humour.

Living in moments that fleet and pause
in endless want and need of
confirmation.

Honour of existence with price of end
and the casino of fate, gaining and
failing.

Questions with no clue and answers
with no sense.

Life.

Funny init?

Written by Ken



WOMEN

Women of Nightingale are
strong and bold,

Of course they are, and have
hearts of gold

Mothers, daughters, sisters,
friends we do not like to leave
each other in the cold

Amazing and beauty to behold
never forget the women are
breaking the mould

**Written collectively by
women in Nightingale House**



THE START OF OUR STORY

In 1846 the City of Liverpool Young Men's Christian Association, now known as You Matter, was founded.

In 1846, poverty in Liverpool was rife. Social problems like problematic alcohol use, literacy challenges, worklessness and child poverty blighted the city streets. The docks brought people searching for a better life to the city, adding to an ever-growing population of people in need.

We established the organisation to address these problems and provide sanctuary. In 1877, we opened the first purpose-built YMCA on Mount Pleasant to shelter people experiencing homelessness, support runaway children and offer night school classes so people could get an education.

YOU · MATTER

THIS IS FOR THE PEOPLE OF YM

I was lost before with no vision to see
Due to past things that made me be
Sad and depressed all the time
You were heaven sent and divine

I entered the home
Which felt like a safety dome
Where I can be rest and be myself
And put the past on the shelf

I learn new skills like cooking and bills
Those lessons were tough, it gave me the chills
But you helped me through it all
Now we can have a ball

continued...

Then we struggled with my mental health

It was rocky, I was losing myself

However, you came like a superhero

I can now live a life way above zero

Now I wonder what the future holds

It will definitely shine like golds

With more help I can't wait to see

Now it's time for a shopping spree

Thanks to you all for your grace

Our hearts are past outer space

With all your kindness and care

Life will be like a breath of fresh air

Thank you so much

Written by Saeed



THE LATE 1800s

We became a staging post for immigrants from the UK and Ireland leaving for the new world. Overloaded ships would reach Liverpool after losing a third of their passengers to disease and hunger. Survivors needed a safe place to rest before the next stage of their journey. So, in 1880, we took over Myrtle Street, a purpose-built gymnasium to support people's health and well-being.

The First World War and the Great Depression depleted our resources. Many of our members and staff, including the deputy CEO, joined up in the Great War. However, we maintained a consistent service for the poorer working classes, surviving year to year with members' donations and the sizable legacy of Mr Samuel Smith, a former Chair and President of the YMCA from 1888.

YOU · MATTER

I CAME HERE LOST

I came here lost, with nowhere to go,
Carrying stories I don't always show.

Through long nights and battles I fight,
You stood with me, brought back some light.

When I felt broken, tired and alone,
You helped me see strength I had never known.

Through every struggle, big or small,
You reminded me You Matter most of all.

Now I'm rebuilding, day by day,
Finding hope I thought had slipped away.

Written by Paula

OCTOPUS

Octopuses are like us

Our bodies what move all day and
our muscles and bones

But like the octopus their brain is what
we wish it to be

Clever.

And don't have to worry about
dementia or mental illness as we age

Always think positive

Written by Mary



THE GREAT DEPRESSION

During the Great Depression, we opened the Gymnasium doors to the long-term unemployed, providing free services to the poorest communities in Liverpool. In 1932, Liverpool YMCA opened Everton Boys Club, with a coffee bar and youth centre.

Our members formed flourishing martial arts and boxing clubs that excelled in regional and national competitions. These clubs are still around today under different names and in other places, but they were born at the YMCA.

YOU · MATTER

BECAUSE YOU SAID I MATTER

I didn't walk in confident.
I walked in carrying everything I couldn't fix.
Fear in my chest.
Doubt in my head.
Silence in my voice.
At YMCA Together Liverpool,
I wasn't rushed.
I wasn't judged.
I wasn't overlooked.
I was seen.
Not as a problem.
Not as a past.
But as a person still becoming.
They didn't promise easy.
They promised support.
And in the quiet consistency
appointments kept,
names remembered,
doors held open
I started rebuilding.

continued...

Not all at once.
But piece by piece.
Now the name changes to
YOU MATTER.
But that's not new to me.
That's what you've been proving every single
day.
When I felt small, you stood beside me.
When I felt lost, you stayed.
When I couldn't see my worth, you reflected it
back to me.
This isn't just a rebrand.
It's a truth written louder.

YOU MATTER.

And because you believed that about me
I finally do too.

Written by Kelechi



THE FIRST TIME, AGAIN

The doors here do not slam.
They close slowly,
like a chapter someone is unsure
they are ready to finish.

People arrive carrying invisible storms
hospital wristbands still warm,
voices in their heads louder
than the world outside.

Some come quiet,
eyes fixed on the floor
as if the ground might open
and take them back to somewhere safer.

But this place is not an ending. It is a corridor.

A kettle boiling in the kitchen,
a support worker asking
"Are you alright today?"
like the question might actually matter.

They have never met me before.

Yet they have met me
a thousand times.

Different names,
different buildings,
different promises
that did not always hold.

So when we sit across the table
I know I am not starting from zero.

I am starting from what came before
missed calls,
closed cases,
doors that opened
and shut again too quickly.

Trust here is not given.
It is built quietly,
cup of tea by cup of tea.

Forms are filled.
Appointments kept.
Keys to rooms are held tightly
like small pieces of the future.

Some days there are setbacks
voices raised,
doors left open in the night,
the weight of old battles returning.

But then something small happens.

Someone laughs again.
Someone cooks their own meal.
Someone bids on a flat
and dares to imagine tomorrow.

And one day they leave through the
same doors they once entered unsure.

Not cured.
Not perfect.
But standing.

Walking toward a front door
that belongs only to them.

And in the quiet that follows we wait for
the next knock because hope, here,
always arrives carrying a bag.

Written by Farris





THE WORLD WARS

Through the Second World War, the British Army requisitioned Myrtle Street gym. Then, in 1941, the American Army requisitioned Mount Pleasant as barracks for their soldiers. With no building of our own, we rented property close to Lime Street to offer accommodation to service men and women.

Across 6 years of war, 14,000 YMCA volunteers delivered more than 18.6 million meals and 660,000 nights of shelter to families and individuals. We kept up the morale of dockworkers by using tea vans to welcome returning ships and mourn those who did not.

YOU · MATTER

180 YEARS OF STRENGTH

For one hundred eighty turning years,
A light has stood through hopes and fears.

Where body, mind, and spirit meet,
A promise made—both strong and sweet.

Within these walls, a lesson grows:
True health is more than what one shows.

It lives in breath, in mindful care,
In lifted hearts and hands that share.

A step, a stretch, a steady run,
A rising with the morning sun—
Each motion writes a living page
In wellness passed from age to age.

Science teaches: balance is key—
Strong hearts, clear minds, community.
Nutrition, rest, and movement wise
Help human strength and hope arise.

Yet health is more than muscle strong;
It thrives where we believe we belong.
In laughter shared, in courage found,
In every life that gathers round.

So celebrate these years that prove
What unity and care can move.
For generations still to be,
May strength and kindness always be free.

And as the future doors unfold,
Your guiding flame will still hold—
A truth both simple and profound:
In healthy lives, hope is found.

Written by Adebayo



After the war, raising money to reopen Mount Pleasant was a struggle. But in 1956, we opened the building again to provide 90 beds for men and women. Two years later, we added another 108 beds.

By 2002, the building needed considerable work to meet modern standards. The Trustees decided to sell it and develop a new centre on Leeds Street. In 2007, we opened the purpose-built centre, providing 69 beds of accommodation to people experiencing homelessness. The YMCA began buying and developing dispersed accommodation, recognising that people needed their own place to live.

YOU · MATTER

I ARRIVED WITH NOTHING

I arrived with nothing but fear in my hands,
Lost in addiction, shifting sands.

Days felt heavy, nights were long,
I'd forgotten where I belong.

But here I heard it, clear and true
A quiet voice saying, "You Matter, too."

Written by Daniella



WHEN YOU SAY

When you say "You Matter"
I know you mean me

Because safety, support and kindness
is here for all to see

In Hestia I like a laugh and a smoke
But most of all with my friends I like a good joke

Written by Keith

n 2



Any spare table
found, please hand
them to staff
Thank you

ALL THE
FIVES
TAXIS
546
5555

CCTV in
24 hours
in p

EVENTS AT
ALT BANK!
THIS WEEK
• Pizza making with Lynda @ 1pm
on Friday
NEXT WEEK
• SMART group - Tues @ 1pm
• Time to Talk - Thurs @ 11?
• Making changes - Fri
• Tea and toast - Wed

Alt



A FOND GOODBYE

A fond goodbye the YMCA,
opening doors to a whole new day
There is no 'isms' or being scared
and staff on hand where
your so your voice can be heard

You can come and go just as you please
It's so what you make of it and your own set of keys
Give it a try with a smile on your dace
Moving on to a beautiful place

Finding yourself, the person you never knew
Realising you matter through and through
Looking back it wasn't so hard
Oh boy you had the winning card

Written by PJ

HESTIA

My name is Lisa and I've been here for
a month,
or few!

In Hestia I've been lucky to make a
friend or two

Keith, Mary and a we can't forget
Minnie the dog

Makes me smile, keeps me happy

Don't judge me now I'm not going all
soppy

I'm feeling good right now

I'm feeling all pink

Pink to make the boys wink

Written by Lisa



OUR MODERN HISTORY

Through our work, we recognised that many of the people we were supporting had experienced complex trauma. We needed to change our approach to offer them better support. So, in 2014, we began exploring how to deliver our services in a psychologically informed way by introducing a Cognitive Analytical framework.

This approach allowed us to expand into other areas of work. In 2016, we won the support contract for two domestic abuse refuges in the city. We opened a mental health service for people coming out of hospital needing somewhere safe to stay. We also brought together six other organisations to deliver 350 beds of accommodation-based support to people experiencing homelessness.

YOU · MATTER

I WALKED IN TIRED

I walked in tired, worn and low,
With heavy things I didn't show.

You gave me time, a place to stay,
And hope that grew a little each day.

In every word and helping hand,
You showed me I can rise and stand

You reminded me, in all this chatter,
Simply and softly... You Matter.

Written by Paul

I CAME IN LOST

I came in lost, unsure, afraid,
With choices and mistakes I'd made.

You gave me space to start again,
Through quiet nights and healing pain.

In simple words that helped me see
You Matter, even me.

Written by Shane



THE LATE 2010s

2017 saw us merge with YMCA Sefton to create YMCA Liverpool and Sefton. The merger brought early years education into our work and reunited us with the health and well-being work from our early history.

In 2019, we won the contract to deliver residential rehab for people with a drug or alcohol issue in the city. We opened a purpose-built, psychologically informed service with 33 beds of en-suite accommodation and a floor of treatment space. Through this, we support more than 100 people out of addiction and into recovery every year.

YOU · MATTER

I WAS TIRED

I was tired of running, tired of shame,
Tired of losing at my own game.

You gave me time, you gave me care,
A steady voice that said, "We're here."

And in the dark, a simple reminder
You Matter and I'm starting to believe it.

Written by Anthony

YOU MATTER

My life matters and so does yours, reflect
on your happiness and take a moment
to pause,
Joy and excitement from the day you
were born, parents and grandparents
full of joy for the new little girl or boy
Each smile, each step along the way
from baby to adult
Their love for you will always matter, all
life

All through the bond will grow and be
strong and true
If you see somebody without a smile
give them yours because it means life
matters,
it will make their heart melt like butter
Kindness is a gift that's free , a gift of
giving from us all that can make us stand
up and be proud and tall

continued...

Serenity and peace around the world
makes this a beautiful place, it puts a smile
on your face

Sparkles of fairy dust the sun, the stars in
the sky gives hope and love to use all
because you matter above all else
believe in yourself

Life matters and can be
beautiful every day
This is my poem and I'm **Peter Fay**



THE PANDEMIC

Working through a pandemic to keep the most vulnerable people in our communities safe and cared for made 2020 the most challenging year in our history. But we didn't shy away from the challenge.

Throughout the year, our teams worked through uncertainty, turmoil and change to open emergency accommodation and bring people off the streets. We supported nearly 700 people, served 28,000 meals, and opened a new mental health service.

YOU · MATTER

IN THE QUIET OF THE DOORWAY

In the quiet of the doorway, where cold
winds used to roam,
There's now warm and gentle refuge,
A place that feels like home.

A safe space built with kindness
Where weary hearts can rest,
Where every name is spoken softly,
And every soul is seen and blessed.

New friends share cups of laughter,
Stories whispered late at night,
And slowly hope begins to glow
A tiny spark becoming light.

continued...

Here, you're wanted, here you matter,
Here your voice and dreams belong.
Hands reach out when dreams belong.
Hands reach out when days feel heavy,
And lift you up when life feels wrong.

In these walls, you find a reason
A reason just to breathe and live.
A reminder that you're worthy.
And you've still so much to give.

This isn't just a hostel
It's a steppingstone, a guide,
A place to rebuild courage
With caring people by your side.

So welcome in, you're not alone
You've found warmth instead of cold.
A space to heal, to start again,
A place to call your own.

Written by Bernie



1-3
CROXTETH ROAD

EMOTIONS

Locations,
Verifications,
Emergency evacuations,
Support groups

Annotations - abbreviations
Notes, letters and reminders
Deliveries and addresses

Whereabouts - medications
Orders without ordering,
outdoors to indoors,
Desperation to satisfaction
Structured housing and needs helped

Written by Martin



LOVE

Look up and down and you will see,
That I love you and you love me,
But if I find you love me not
My love for you shall be forgot

Written by Matthew



RECOVERING

With the pandemic still impacting our world we worked to further reduce rough sleeping by opening Florence House, a rapid assessment service, bringing people off the streets and finding the best future solution for them.

We also began our work in providing accommodation and support in Alf Bank House.

As a consequence of expanding we decided we needed a new name so after much consultation with our teams and people who used our services we became YMCA Together.

We expanded our domestic abuse services to offer respite services for men and women fleeing domestic abuse with an additional complexity such as drug or alcohol use

YOU · MATTER

LIFE HERE

Life here is wild full of drugs and booze,
With midnight debates about lost socks and shoes.
Some days we're laughing, some days we're flat,
Some days we're wondering, "Where's my light at?"

But through all the chaos, the noise and the chatter,
The staff stand strong, reminding us we matter.
They pick us gently when we're feeling stuck,
And never once treat us like we're out of luck.

So even when life feels messy or tough,
They're the ones saying, "You're valued enough".
And somehow in all this unpredictable fuss,
This hostel becomes home because they don't
give up on us.

Written by Martin



BUILDING PATHWAYS

People experiencing homelessness have some of the worst health inequalities of any other population of people. Our commitment to filling the gaps in services and systems saw us end 2023 opening our care home, Hestia House. This 22 bed service supports people experiencing homelessness who have care needs.

Hestia House goes beyond a standard care home. Guided by our values of Strength, Humility, Respect, Empathy and Kindness (SHREK). The team works with health and social care partners including GPs, hospital discharge teams, social care and drug and alcohol teams to deliver joined-up, high-quality support.

YOU · MATTER

WE GET LOST

We get lost in our ways, hard to change
overnight,
Sometimes it feels like we can't see life in a
different light.
This place is full of chaos, drugs and
booze in the air,
Yet somehow the staff still show patience,
still care.

Even when they're treated badly, they
don't walk away
They remind us that we matter, every
single day.
They feed us, distract us, keep spirits alive,
Showing us that we are human, we can
survive.

Homeless, but not hopeless that's the
truth they prove,
With every kind of action, they help us
slowly move.

Written by Paul

180 YEARS OF YMCA

A time to feel proud

A time to celebrate

A place to feel safe

A time to hang out with your mate

A place of safety to work things out

So when time is done


You can go back out into the world

Refreshed and together

Equipped to face up again

To all lifes trials and tribulations

Written by Pauline



Believe
YOU CAN
AND
YOU'RE HALFWAY
There

AND SO, TODAY

In 2024, we received Liverpool's highest civic honour as Liverpool City Council admitted us to the Freedom Roll of Associations and Institutions.

We bought 20 houses for young people experiencing homelessness and who were in need of some support.

Into 2026 we're expanding our services into Halton and Greater Manchester. We want to ensure across the North West, the people we work alongside have the services they need.

YOU · MATTER

A note from this poem's author Merhawie:

One hundred and eighty years ago, a spark was lit in the heart of a changing world. Since then, the YMCA has stood as a beacon of hope, empowering millions to reach their full potential in mind, body, and spirit. As you celebrate this monumental 180th birthday, you are not just honouring your history—you are embracing a future where every individual is seen, heard, and valued.

YOU MATTER

For eighteen decades, a light has burned bright,
A refuge of hope in the depth of the night.
Born from a vision, a purpose, a call,
To lift up the weary and stand for us all.

I came to your doors when the world felt so wide,
With nowhere to turn and no place to hide.
But you saw the spark that I'd long since forgot,
And showed me a path I'd never have sought.

From youth's early dreams to the
strength of the soul,
You nurtured the parts that would
make me feel whole.
More than a building, more than a name,
You are the warmth of a life-giving flame.

Now the world shifts, and a new dawn is near,
With a name that rings out, resonant and clear.
You Matter—two words that define every heart,
The truth of our value, a place for a start.

At one hundred and eighty, your story is gold,
A legacy written in lives you uphold.
From the YMCA to the light of today,
You Matter remains what you give and you say.

Thank you for being the hand in my own,
For proving that none of us walk this alone.
Through every new chapter, let this be the sign:
That my life, and your life, will always matter

Written by Merhawie



I FEEL

I feel I matter

I feel like I'm home

I now feel that I'm not alone

I'm safe and warm today at Florence House

All staff are caring I'm not alone

I'm at home

And now I remember not all who wander are lost

Written by Jay



TIME FOR ME

I'm hanging up my lanyard today
and boy now it's me time dear
So stand aside.. my eras here
I'll start with botox, lip filler
plumped just right
A sunbed glow, a golden tan
A brand new me because I can
Zumba classes, gym galore
I'll stretch and sweat and
stretch some mor
I'll wine and dine, I'll holiday
I might not come back, who can say
I'll miss my boss, my lovely team
You've all been part of my scene
Laugh, chaos, fun
But now my YMCA days are done
It's been a pleasure
Truly so
But now it's time for me to go
To live unfiltered, wild and free
A crazy lady I shall be

Written by Yvonne



YOU MATTER

Trauma, adversity, difficult early lives aren't solved by sticking plasters, we cannot repair peoples difficult experiences but through real, meaningful, relational connections we can help people see themselves and their futures differently.

As the national YMCA focus moved towards work with young people, the name no longer reflected the full range of services delivered. In 2026 we become You Matter.

Changing the name does not change the support offered. It allows the organisation to continue its work in a way that fits what it does now.

YOU · MATTER

YOU MATTER

Some days the world feels cold and grey,
And hope seems just too far away.
Just pause for a moment, breathe, and
remember
You are truly valued, you matter.

Even when days feel long and it's freezing cold
at night
The world needs your voice & your inner light
Just remember, you are seen, you are loved,
you matter.

When your mind says you're not enough
Tough days happen and you know what, that's
okay,
Believe me, your smile will brighten someone's
day.
Through it all, say it back, say it loud, you are
loved and you matter.

You really do.

Written by Jan

As we turn over a new page,
we'd like to thank every
person who took the time and
gave the energy to make this
book happen.

YOU · MATTER

HOPE + HOMES SINCE 1846



YOU · MATTER