

**Case Study:
Inspiring YMCA residents to realise their potential**

YMCA resident:

George Farhall, age 22 years

Location:

Horsham YMCA (The Y Centre),
England

As part of the YMCA Downslink Group, Horsham YMCA (The Y Centre) provides housing for 50 young people. It has a strong focus on motivation and skills development to enable transition from supported accommodation to independent living. The Fruit-full Communities project offers residents and site support workers the opportunity to help create a community orchard through a series of workshops, designed to inspire and equip young people with new skills while working outdoors in a real-life situation.

One resident, George Farhall, found himself homeless in 2016 following severe domestic tension, which forced him to leave the family home. George has learning difficulties but has a passion for gardening. He was inspired by the Fruit-full Communities project and its hands-on activities. During the project field trip to a specialist horticultural college at Stanmer Park, near Brighton, George realised that enrolling on the City and Guilds level 1 award (Flourish) at Plumpton College would allow him to further develop a range of practical horticultural skills that may eventually lead to future employment.



As George himself said *‘It showed me that there was something outside the Y Centre’.*

During Fruit-full Communities workshops, George got involved in a range of activities including research into varieties of local apples that could be planted in their planned orchard. This information and George’s recommendations were then used in the final design of the orchard, as well as practical tree planting techniques, maintenance and tree after care.

The Fruit-full Communities Project offered George (and other YMCA residents like him) applied horticultural experience that suited George’s learning limitations and

made him realise that it was a skill with which he could achieve success. He now feels that he has a brighter future ahead of him with aspirations to complete the City and Guilds level 2 Certificate and get a job related to the course.

The Y Centre's Learning and Engagement Coordinator, Kevin Budge, is especially delighted with George's progress, taking into account his low attention span and long, rather difficult journey to college. Bearing just these two issues in mind, Kevin delights in saying *'that's why I am so impressed with him for being on the Level 2 course!'*



When asked how he thinks the project's activities and new orchard can benefit the other residents, George clearly believes that it has the power to motivate them to do something to potentially improve their lives. He feels very proud that the new orchard features a special tree planted in memory of a previous resident.

What makes George's story special?

Following an evaluation of the project's first year, issues surrounding resident engagement and workshop attendance were highlighted by a number of sites which is a common occurrence in this group of young people. The idea of going outdoors, especially in challenging weather, can be a tough barrier to break down. Thanks to this project George and other residents like him embraced this opportunity to develop their interest and passion for gardening through the acquisition of practical horticultural knowledge and experience. George showed a continuous keen interest in aspects of tree care and maintenance, even when others in the workshop disappeared for a break.

Despite his learning difficulties and low attention span, George has coped with long bus journeys to the specialist land-based college where he studies and has succeeded in graduating to level 2 of the City and Guilds award. According to Horsham's Learning & Engagement Coordinator, he is a determined young man with an eye on improving his life chances through further education.

