

# Case Study: Supporting young people in their YMCA community

## Location:

YMCA North Staffordshire, Harding Rd,  
Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3AE

YMCA North Staffordshire provides accommodation for young people and is specifically designed for the 16-25 age group. They completed their beautiful orchard in December 2016 and planted twenty nine cider apple trees at the YMCA's Hanley campus as part of the Lottery-funded Fruit-full Communities project.

During the process, YMCA residents were given the chance to learn new skills, such as pruning, tree maintenance, orchard design and budget management. The harvested apples will be used to make cider to sell in the YMCA's on-site shop, an enterprise which will raise funds for the charity. The orchard, which features benches and pathways, also provides a pleasant natural environment for residents, staff and volunteers to relax or exercise.

Everyone involved in this urban orchard has been on a journey. From the campfire discussions about the site's potential in June 2016 through to the formal opening of the Lydia-Louise Orchard which took place in December 2016.

This was an inspirational journey of a community coming together and working hard to develop an outdoor space to not only be really proud of, but also to help them cope with difficult situations young people often face in their everyday lives.



As Mel, a YMCA North Staffordshire resident, explains *“along the way our dear friends Tom and Ebony tragically lost their baby after 3 weeks of being born. We named the orchard after their baby Lydia-Louise. Working on creating a place to go, to grieve and scatter Lydia’s ashes helped the young couple as well as everybody else at our YMCA to cope with this tragedy. We are like one big family and the loss of their baby affected everybody. We also built a mosaic of a unicorn together with Lydia’s Mum and doing something for other kids as well really helped”*.

Tom, aged 24, from Hanley, said: *“I have been involved with the orchard since day one...I loved that the orchard is named after my daughter. When Ebony heard, she cried, and I thought it was a great idea because this way she will never be forgotten. We scattered some of her ashes there so she will always be a part of the trees”*.

As Bruce Petitt, technical services manager at the YMCA, said *"The YMCA in North Staffordshire believes we have a responsibility to increase the life chances of the young people we serve. Lots of young people have engaged in the project, which will have a real and lasting benefit. Future generations will also benefit as the orchard matures."*

### **What makes YMCA North Staffordshire's story special?** .....

The Fruit-full Communities project enabled the young people of YMCA North Staffordshire and their local community to come together and build a lasting outdoor space for everyone who currently lives and works at the YMCA and for future generations. It also contributed to the healing process after the baby passed away by offering them a task with a physical focus and a lovely space for contemplation, reflection and rest.



This is a great example of how being involved in nature and the outdoors helps people cope with challenging situations and mental health issues.

