

## **WG Self Evaluation Statement- March 2024**

**The following self-evaluation statement was approved by the Board of Trustees at its Board Meeting held on 19 March 2024.**

Since the Association's last self-evaluation statement, which was submitted in September 2022, Cardiff YMCA Housing Association has achieved the following milestones:

- Continued to strengthen its board of directors/management by recruiting new board members with backgrounds in housing, finance, health sector and commercial marketing, in line with our internal skills audit.
- Aligned to the above bullet point, increased the diversity of its board, by recruiting new board members from various ethnic backgrounds, ensuring a better representation at board level, of the communities the YMCA serves.
- Embedded the Board Appraisal/Reflection process that proactively includes evaluating individual performance; planning for board recruitment; and succession planning as the board continues to evolve its skills base and membership.
- Reviewed and realigned its sub committee structure to better reflect the needs of the organisation moving forward. This review led to a reduction of sub committees that were more focussed on key business areas and allowed for board members and senior leaders to better manage their responsibilities.
- Created a new Board Training Policy that recognises ongoing professional development of board members. The policy and action plan is continuously reviewed by the Governance & People Sub Committee and reports directly to full board.
- Successfully completed and submitted on time the requirements for the first YMCA Membership Agreement criteria. This process was led by the Governance and People sub committee over 12 months and presented to the board in Nov 2023 for approval ahead of the December 2023 submission deadline.
- Embedded the board's Deep Dive policy further with board continuing to choose independently its area of review. This year's review is to focus on health and safety and the Big 8 risks in relation to the association's ongoing property compliance and maintenance. This Deep dive will take place in April/May 2024.

- Successfully transitioned from the previous 'pilot' status with the local authority to a standard contract for its new 'lower needs' model, focussing on rapid rehousing, employment, education and skills programmes, ensuring all KPIs and other performance measures were successfully achieved throughout.
- Signed off on a new joint Business Plan (2024-27) which outlined four key strategic priorities:
  1. Greater Reach & Impact
  2. A culture of contribution
  3. Clean & Green Organisation
  4. Being Financially Sustainable
- On the back of the successful creation of George Williams House in March 2021 (18 self contained move on apartments), Cardiff YMCA Housing Association has successfully raised £2.7m towards its new Bedford Place development (18 self contained homes for young people at risk of homelessness), from Welsh Government TACP funding (£2.24m) and continued capital funding from Julian Hodge Foundation. The project is currently live and scheduled to be completed by January 2025. This scheme also is aligned to the YMCAs new strategic plan, in particular strategic priorities 1,2 and 4, listed above.
- Successfully applied for and obtained Welsh Government Optimised Retrofit funding for two YMCA projects- The Walk and 5 East Grove residential project, valued at over £400,000. These schemes are part of the YMCAs commitment to the sector's decarbonisation strategy as well as its own commitment to be a 'clean and green' organisation.
- Invested in a new Senior Leadership role-a Director of Income Generation. This role is designed specifically to begin the transitioning of the YMCA away from its over reliance on core grant funding and move to a more sustainable funding model in the long term. As of February 2024, this new post has created over £200k of new income for the YMCA.
- Re-visited its previous commitment to merge YMCA Cardiff (Charity) to combine into one legal entity, and subject to due diligence reporting obtained an 'agreement in principle' from the Minister for Climate Change and Housing. This decision has been on hold since the onset of the Ukraine war due to escalating energy prices. Both boards re-visited this issue in 2023 and reaffirmed its commitment to merge in 2024, once it re-appraised the economic environment. It jointly found and evidenced that the conditions to merge remained favourable for both YMCAs.
- Maintained its co-regulatory approach with Welsh Government Housing Regulation team that included frequent communication on changing business needs and monthly cashflow sharing.

**Include an account of how the Board knows the organisation complies with each regulatory standard including reference to key performance data and sources of assurance**

Cardiff YMCA Housing Association has well developed and detailed mechanisms to provide the board overall assurance in relation to ongoing adherence to Welsh Government's regulatory standards. Detailed below is a myriad of evidence from board dates to effective reporting through board meetings, sub committees, deep dive, away days and external independent reports that are regularly evidenced in board meetings or sub committees to provide assurance to the board overall. Aligned to this is, the frequent communication between the Board Chair and chairs of sub committees and the CEO and Senior leadership team, where challenge is encouraged. This constant cycle of communication provides ongoing reassurance to board members of the continued adherence and commitment of the organisation to these regulatory standards.

These assurance models are complimented further by a Board Assurance Framework that is reviewed at every other board meeting as well as copies of key external independent assurance bodies that are made available to trustees at sub committees and board meetings or on demand. Such bodies, include Investors in People, Peninsula Health and Safety (and HR) and KPIs returns from its core housing contract with the local authority.

**Assess compliance with the Code of Governance that the organisation has adopted**

The association is now well versed in annually reviewing its ongoing compliance to the CHC Code of Governance, which it formally committed to in May 2021. Following this initial review there was a second review from October 2021 through to April 2022, which culminated in a report highlighting areas for improvement and a subsequent action plan was created.

The CHC code was reviewed again in February- March 2024 and updates were formally presented to board at its March 2024 full board meeting. Reassuringly, the actions highlighted in 2022 had all been achieved, showing full compliance to the CHC code across all sections and areas. This will continue to be reviewed annually by the board, through its sub committee structures that report directly to the full board at least once a year.

**Explain the principal evidence which has been relied upon in conducting the evaluation**

The board receives its assurance on the work of the association by ongoing assessment and engagement and by a variety of different means. As stated above the board meets every other month. However, assurance is predominantly gained by regular engagement with Senior Leadership Team and other key staff through subcommittee structures. Each



subcommittee is chaired by a board member and a member of the SLT attends. The culture set in these meetings is one of mutual support but also evidence based in terms of key areas of work. As indicated, the sub committee structure was reviewed in 2023 and amended to the following:

Governance & People Sub Committee- Jeff Owen

Finance, Property and Development sub committee - Tom Wilkinson (to be replaced imminently with Richard Miles, due to Tom taking on Chair's role)

Front Line Services Sub Committee - Stacy Thomas

Merger Working Group - set up to oversee the current merger with Cardiff YMCA and has joint board members from both YMCAs. This has currently re-started following a period of hiatus following the joint board's decision to pause the merger last year.

The sub committee structure is an inherently robust structure as it allows for in-depth discussion and evaluation of a key business area, outside of the main busy board agenda. Within this system, the board can check on progress through the sub committees and question further using minutes and verbal reporting at each board meeting.

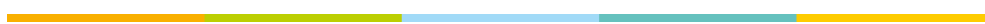
Moreover, subcommittee reporting is a standard agenda item at each board meeting and each subcommittee has an action plan for the forthcoming year along with timelines for implementation. Progress is reported back at each board meeting by the relevant subcommittee Chair and subsequent minutes.

In addition, the board gains further assurance from its Board Risk Assurance Register (BAF) which is updated at every other board meeting. This register operates as a live risk register and assurance checklist for the board on all key areas. Senior Leaders and the board work together to update each risk accordingly at board meetings and update the various levels of assurance on each risk that is required, and any amended actions are recorded appropriately.

The Front Line Services subcommittee review and analyse the now quarterly WG Business Continuity Survey and this is also presented and analysed by the full board also.

Aligned to this process is the annual Deep Dive process, where the board chooses an area of the association's work to focus on, independent of SMT input and undertakes a 2-day audit of this key area. This process is led by Board members themselves and an independent report is then drafted by those members, with any recommendations or areas highlighted for improvement. A subsequent action plan is produced, following the board report and SMT are then tasked with implementing this plan in accordance with board timelines. The board oversees this to ensure compliance through its sub committee structures, which report directly to the board.

Since our last report, the board has also formalised the role of Company Secretary, which now sits within the duties of the Director of HR and Quality Assurance. This role has the



ability to also report directly to the Chair and board outside of the standard line management arrangements with the CEO.

Finally, the board also utilises the following options to validate its overall assurance:

1. Presentation by external agencies and partners such as Cardiff Council to the board on its performance in relation to main HSG homelessness contract and IIP assessor. This is done at least once every 18 months.
2. Sector Risk papers produced by WG or other relevant bodies- these are commonly shared at subcommittees and board meetings and discussed accordingly.
3. Annual stakeholder surveys of key partners and stakeholders- this is currently being updated to ensure the YMCA captures all relevant feedback and is included in our continuous improvement plan.
4. Finally, the board undergoes sector relevant training and has recently refreshed its Board Training plan to ensure new and existing members remain current on sector trends and issues. This ensures a culture of continuous improvement at board level, aligned to the culture within the wider association.

**Demonstrate that the process of evaluation has been robust**

Below is a list of dates that show the engagement of board members from board meetings and sub committees from the YMCAs last submission on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Copies of all sub committee and board minutes are available on request.

<b>Board Meetings</b>	<b>Finance and DAM</b>	<b>Governance &amp; People</b>	<b>Front Line Services</b>	<b>Meetings with WG Regulation Team</b>
15 Nov 2022	8 Nov 2022	12 Sep 2022		30 Sep 2022
24 Jan 2023	3 Oct 2022	28 Nov 2022	13 Sep 2022	17 Jan 2023
21 Mar 2023	1 Mar 2023	15 Dec 2022	7 Nov 2022	17 Feb 2023
16 May 2023	9 May 2023		10 Jan 2023	23 Mar 2023
9 Jun 2023- Board Away Day	8 Aug 2023	18 Apr 2023	24 Apr 2023	18 Apr 2023
5 Jul 2023	7 Nov 2023	7 Jun 2023	27 Jun 2023	3 Jul 2023
12 Sep 2023- AGM	20 Feb 2024	3 Jul 2023	8 Aug 2023	16 Oct 2023
12 Sep 2023	5 Mar 2024	17 Aug 2023	16 Oct 2023	20 Feb 2024
14 Nov 2024	12 Mar 2024	7 Nov 2023	11 Dec 2023	

23 Jan 2024		9 Jan 2024	11 March 2024	
		6 March 2024		
19 March 2024				

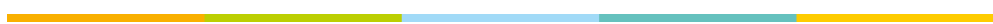
**Explain how the needs and views of the tenants have been understood and considered as part of the self evaluation**

Under the revised HSG Contract with the local authority that the YMCA now holds, the majority of our service users move on from hostel accommodation within 6 months of entering the YMCA. However, the YMCA continues to focus on the needs and demands of our service users. In the past 12 months, the YMCA has adopted the following:

Monthly Tenant & Resident Involvement Group meetings (TRIG) with staff and management. This involves feedback on current services as well as highlighting new opportunities for consultation. From this group, monthly activity surveys have been sent and implemented when requested, and staff have identified that service users prefer to be contacted via email (this also helps the service user to be able to translate text immediately when required) Job search sessions, basic digital skills sessions, English conversational sessions, and PRS Hubs have also been implemented. Significant changes implemented by this group include:

- Following the success of the self-catering pilot all service users who now enter the hostels are placed straight on to self-catering and as at the Ambassador, a kitchen for service users will be installed at the Walk in 2024 – 2025. This change was led by SU consultation.
- There is a continued focus on inclusion and diversity- this is being led by our service users who do not speak English as a first language. We have continued to recruit engaging volunteers who speak a range of service users’ languages to translate posters as well as our key programs, such as the Tenancy Ready Program.
- Renewed focus on partnership work with other agencies to complement our existing services. Such new partnerships include links with the Welsh Refugee Council who come in regularly to promote a positive move-on experience and to dispel myths. Partnerships with other front-line services to provide support for our USAC project and to help these young service users feel part of the community.

Through our Education, Employment & Training (EET) Team, which was established at the outset of the new lower needs provision and in recognition of the new focus of our service users coming into the YMCA they have made the following possible:



- Close working relationship with the local authority's Into work service to enable our service users to access employment – we have linked with them to carry out the numeracy and literacy tests with service users to ascertain their needs.
- Roll out of enhanced language provisions and packs that include the use of translators to better support new service users' needs. – ongoing use of interpreters and translation apps to meet the ongoing needs of service users.
- Involvement of our service users to help prepare, menus and meals of their culture for our feed the community day, then assist with the serving of the meals they have prepared on the day, which helps them become part of the community for when they move on.

This information is collated and presented to the Front-line Sub Committee in the first instance, where progress is reported on and checked against KPIs. This, in turn, is then reported back to the board, along with any key recommendations for changes requested by our service users. The Governance and People sub-committee is also assisting the board with the implementation of Equality Impact Assessments concerning the introduction and review of any new and existing policies.

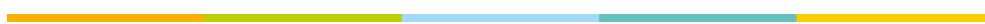
**Identify strategic risks and associated controls or signpost to other documentation where key risks are articulated**

Please the latest version of the Board's Assurance Framework which details the current risks facing the association. This framework is frequently updated and presented to board for review at every other board meeting.

A significant strategic risk remains the pending merger between YMCA Cardiff and Cardiff YMCA Housing Association. Despite being on hold since September 2022, both boards re-committed to the merger in the coming 12 months, following a strategic review in September 2023.

This matter is currently live and a revamped Merger Working Group, consisting of members of both YMCA boards has now restarted. The previous red lines remain for the Housing Association remains: (listed below)

1. Confirmation from WG that the proposed merger of the Housing Association into the charity YMCA Cardiff (and the transfer of its RSL status also) would not exclude the new entity from applying for and drawing down social housing grant in the future.



2. Confirmation from Cardiff Council that it's HSG grant for homelessness prevention would not be at risk. Verbal assurance has already been provided, subject to the continued RSL status being maintained.
3. Confirmation from Housing Benefit agency that its current rent levels for its sites would not be altered. Again, verbal assurance has been provided, subject to the continued RSL status being maintained.

All of the due diligence reports have already been shared with WG regulation team and emails requesting written confirmation of the above areas have been sent. No red flag risks have been identified during this process. Furthermore, a separate risk register for merger has been developed to ensure no areas are overlooked pending full merger. Discussions with all key stakeholders are advanced and due to the length of time of this proposed merger, the key issues are well identified. The board will ensure that Welsh Government is kept up to speed with developments in a 'live' timeframe, as this matter progresses through this coming year.

Signed



Tom Wilkinson

Chair

Cardiff YMCA Housing Association

Date: 19 March 2024

