

**small talks,
big difference**

Mental Health Awareness Week

11th – 17th May 2026

YMCA

Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

What is Small Talks?

Small Talks is YMCA England & Wales' mental health campaign aimed at breaking the stigma around mental health through the power of positive conversations. Talking about mental health isn't always easy.

But by starting small conversations with friends, colleagues, residents, and young people, we can help create spaces where people feel comfortable speaking honestly about how they're feeling.

This pack contains everything you need to help bring Small Talks to life at your YMCA. Since launching in 2021, the campaign has grown year on year, with **more than 50 YMCAs across the federation** taking part.

Together, we've helped create hundreds of moments of connection - conversations, check-ins, and acts of kindness that make a real difference.

Now we're inviting even more YMCAs to get involved for Mental Health Awareness Week, taking place 11–17 May 2026. Whether you host an event, share messages online, or simply encourage more everyday conversations, every action counts.

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What is included in this pack?

Your guide to Small Talks

Main activity: 'Small Notes'

How to get involved

Order your Small Talks pack

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Your guide to Small Talks

Mental health, like physical health, is something that we all have.

While awareness around mental health has grown in recent years, talking about how we're really feeling can still feel difficult. Small Talks was created to help make those conversations easier.

By taking the time to check in with someone, listen without judgement, and create spaces where people feel heard, we can help break down stigma and build stronger communities.

This is especially important for the young people and residents we support at YMCA. Encouraging open conversations around mental health can help them develop confidence, resilience, and the ability to seek support when they need it.

Everything in this pack is designed to help you and your YMCA community create more opportunities for those small but powerful conversations.

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TALK

You may be wondering where to start when it comes to talking about mental health but just remember to T A L K.

You will see this acronym popping up on posters, graphics and on our web page to help promote the message.

Take the time

In your day-to-day chats, check in with those around you and make an effort to ask people how they are doing.

Ask twice

“I’m fine” can be an instant response when people ask how we’re doing. Asking a second time can lead to a more honest and open response.

Learn to listen

Allow people the time needed to talk about their feelings. It may not come all at once, but make sure you’re letting them say what they need to.

Keep it up

Don’t stop with one chat. Remember to continue checking in to see how those closest to you are doing.

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Mental Health Awareness Week



Mental Health Awareness Week is an annual campaign that takes place each May.

This year, it runs from 11–17 May. The theme this year is Action.

While raising awareness about mental health is important, real change happens when we take action - whether that's supporting someone around us, prioritising our own wellbeing, or creating environments where people feel able to talk openly.

Small actions can make a big difference. A conversation. A check-in. A kind message. A moment of listening.

Across YMCA communities, these actions happen every day through the work we do with young people, residents, staff and volunteers.

Small Talks is one way we can continue to turn awareness into action - creating opportunities for meaningful conversations across the federation.

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Small Notes

Small Talks is about creating space for open and honest conversations around mental health. It's about encouraging everyone – staff, volunteers, and young people at your YMCA alike – to feel comfortable talking about how they're really doing, all in a safe and familiar setting.

We know that not everyone finds it easy to speak up, and that's okay. A kind note, a thoughtful reflection, or a few words of encouragement can be just as powerful as a conversation. That's why we're excited to introduce our latest Small Talks activity: **Small Notes**.

Small Notes are exactly what they sound like – short, anonymous messages designed to uplift, thank, or encourage others. Whether it's a message of appreciation for a colleague, a few supportive words for someone going through a tough time, or a general reminder that no one is alone, these notes can have a real impact.

To help you get started, we've created a branded Small Notes template that you can download and print. In the lead-up to **Mental Health Awareness Week**, we invite you to encourage your YMCA community to fill out and display their Small Notes somewhere visible; this could be a shared noticeboard, a common area, or anywhere people will see them.

These notes will act as small sparks of positivity throughout your space - reminders that care, kindness, and connection are always close by.

Small Talks is all about creating positive conversations around our mental health and wellness. An anonymous small note of kindness or words of wisdom could be the reassurance someone needs.

Why not share a small note today?

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[Download your 'Small Notes' template](#)

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Tea Talks



Tea Talks is an opportunity to spark positive conversations around mental health and wellbeing with those in your YMCA, but with the added bonus of tea and cake.

You could organise a Tea Talks as part of a group, but you can also do this as individuals with a colleague, friend or family member.

This year, you might like to incorporate the 'Small Notes' activity as part of your Tea Talks – inviting those in the room to submit and share a short kind message.

We've created a host of tools, assets and activities to help you organise your Tea Talks. These include digital and physical assets. The physical assets, including our popular Small Talks tea bags, which can be ordered through our online shop.

[Order now](#)

Digital assets including branded bunting, message boards, and activities including bingo, word searches and colouring sheets can be found on the Small Talks portal.

[Download assets](#)

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Small Talks asset pack



Our Small Talks packs have been specially designed to allow you to promote the Small Talks campaign and organise your own events and activities such as Tea Talks and Small Notes.

The assets below can be ordered as part of the pack ahead of Mental Health Awareness Week.

We'd encourage you to place your order **as soon as possible** to allow enough time for delivery. Assets are free to order while stocks last.

[Order now](#)

Included in the pack are:

- 25 x Tea Bags
- 2 x Small Talks T-Shirts
- 4 x "Here to Talk" Badges
- 50 x A5 Leaflets
- 10 x A4 Posters
- 25 x Conversation Starter Cards



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Assets

You can download a mixture of digital and printed assets via our Small Talks portal which you can use to promote Small Talks in the run up and during Mental Health Awareness Week.

[Download more assets](#)

As previously mentioned, you can order your Small Talks pack to help you organise your very own Tea Talks via the Small Talks shop.

The assets are listed below:

Digital assets

There are various assets available on the portal to help promote Small Talks and related activities. We'd encourage you to share our Small Talks video, which showcases what the campaign is all about and tends to perform well with our online audience.

Printable assets

To help make Mental Health Awareness Week engaging, we have created assets for you to use.

These can be included as part of your Tea Talks event or just to decorate your YMCA on the day itself. Some of the printable assets include:

- Tea Talks bunting
- Message board
- Small Notes template

Activities

There are a host of activities available on our Small Talks portal for you to download and encourage positive conversation. These include bingo, colouring sheets as well as our youth packs to use when working with a younger audience.

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Engagement levels

We understand that capacity can be at a premium when it comes to promoting Small Talks and getting involved, therefore, we have three levels of engagement.

Depending on how much time you have, you could choose one of the example engagement levels below.

Engagement level 1

Promote the campaign across your social media and at your YMCA

- Print off posters and display across your YMCA
- Share the Small Talks campaign on social media

Engagement level 2

Engage with staff, volunteers and young people throughout Mental Health Awareness Week

- Organise your own Tea Talks event
- Use the youth pack in your youth work or with housing residents
- Encourage people to take part in a Small Walks.

Engagement level 3

Embed the campaign into the work your YMCA does all year round

- Ask staff to include T A L K guidance in their conversations
- Hold regular events (e.g. Small Walks) to engage with staff, volunteers and young people
- Promote Small Talks all year round on social media



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Feedback

Small Talks has gone from strength to strength over its many iterations, reaching more and more young people and their YMCAs every year. A large part of that is down to the helpful feedback you offer us.

If you have any feedback from using the pack ,or organising events and activities for Small Talks, then please do let us know.

Following Mental Health Awareness Week, we'll be in touch with a short survey to gather your initial reflections. Our Campaigns Officer Dom Taylor would also be keen to meet via Teams and gather your thoughts in greater depth.

For this, or any other enquiries, please contact us at dom.taylor@ymca.org.uk

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