



# YOUTH WORK IN ISLINGTON

## IMPACT REPORT

2022/23



# FOREWORD



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All of our children and young people are special and important to us. Islington is home to almost 38,000 of these remarkable young people aged 13-25 and we want them all to thrive. Islington is also home to an unrivalled vibrant, engaging and inspiring offer of free universal youth work. Delivered in youth clubs and other community settings across the borough, the offer is open to any Islington young person who wants to access it. Throughout the year, young people are engaged in places and spaces where they feel safe, connecting with skilled and supportive youth workers and taking part in a range of activities including archery, afrobeats, baking, basketball, dance, drama, debates, podcasts, film making and more. Good youth work supports young people to make the most of their teenage years and develop into healthy, confident and successful adults. We are proud that in Islington we have continued to invest in great youth work, including an additional £500,000 in 2022/23 and ongoing, when many other boroughs have not.

In 2021, we set out on a journey of discovery led by the Islington Youth Councillors, to understand what young people, the adults who support them and other key stakeholders want universal youth work in Islington in the 2020s to look like. We heard about young people's experiences of growing up in Islington through ethnographic studies. We heard from youth workers, social workers, targeted youth support, the police,

community safety, the voluntary, community and faith sector, health and schools.

The feedback told us that an outward facing, community focused, well connected, inclusive and diverse offer staffed by skilled and well supported youth workers was wanted and needed. The Young Islington universal youth offer was born. Young Islington's universal offer has been building over the past year and I am delighted to introduce this first annual impact report, which tells some of the stories of young people's experiences in some of our youth services. It fits in with our Islington 2030 strategy which aims to ensure that the borough is a place where all children and young people are rooted in a community where they feel safe, can thrive and are able to be part of and lead change. I hope this and subsequent impact reports will provide important insight into the power of how youth work experiences and relationships make a real difference to the futures of so many of our young people.



**Cllr Michelline Safi Ngongo**  
**Executive Member for Children Young People and Families**

# FOREWORD



As young Islington residents, we believe that young people need to play a key role in how services are planned and delivered. We know how important youth services are for young people. We have both attended youth clubs in Islington for many years and have been able to learn new skills, gain new achievements and meet new people. Youth services provide young people with a safe environment, educational and recreational activities and support when they need it. They are an invaluable resource and play an important role in helping young people develop into healthy and responsible adults. They also provide support for young people who are facing challenging situations, including advice and guidance on issues like housing, education, employment, health, and relationships.

As part of this report, we interviewed youth workers and young people across the borough, learning about the types of support that youth organisations offer, and the main challenges they face. We heard stories from young people about what they had learned in their youth club and why it was so important to them. Youth voice is integrated throughout this report: all the quotes from young people, including from the interviews we conducted, are highlighted in blue boxes.

We're proud to have contributed to this first report on the impact of youth work in Islington. We're excited to keep working with Mary's, London Youth, the locality networks and the Quality, Leadership and Impact Partnership to make youth services in Islington better for everyone.

I hope in the near future, young people have easier access to youth services in terms of transport and their safety in the streets as crime is still very present.

**Bruna, age 16**  
**Central Locality Co-Chair**



My hope is that everybody, no matter what gender, race or disabilities they have can feel welcome into our amazing borough. They have the power to contribute positively to not only their community but also everybody else's that intertwine between us.

**Wilson, age 16**  
**North Locality Co-Chair**



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

Welcome to the first annual impact report for Young Islington's universal youth work offer. This report, published by Islington's Quality and Impact Steering Group and produced by the Quality, Leadership and Impact Partnership (QLIP), brings together data and evidence from providers across the borough to demonstrate the crucial impact of the Young Islington universal youth work offer.

The report looks specifically at providers of youth work services, rather than other types of provision for young people. The National Youth Agency defines youth work as 'a distinct educational process that supports young people's personal, social and educational development'. It can take place in a range of settings and in many forms, but in all cases centres around trusted relationships with adults and the voluntary engagement of young people. It gives young people opportunities to:

- explore their values, beliefs and ideas
- develop their voice, influence and place in society
- improve practical and technical skills, to realise their full potential<sup>1</sup>

**Youth Leadership** has been central to this report. The Young Islington locality co-chairs received training on documentary interview skills, and visited providers across the borough to talk to youth workers and young people about their experiences. Young people participated in creative impact measurement activities to share their stories. Quotes and stories from young people are highlighted in blue throughout this report. Where you see the orange loudspeaker symbol, you can click through to hear young people's voices directly.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nya.org.uk/career-in-youth-work/what-is-youth-work/>

# A CONNECTED AND IMPACTFUL OFFER

This report seeks to share a picture of how Islington's youth sector is meeting the needs of its young people and supporting them to develop and grow. It includes a focus on services commissioned by Islington Council as well as the wider Young Islington offer, which consists of:

- All Islington's universal youth provision, including Lift, Platform, SoapBox, Rose Bowl, the Zone as well as more local, community focused provision operating throughout the year
- Summersiversity
- The Quality, Leadership and Impact Partnership (QLIP)
- The Young Islington Locality Youth Networks
- An enhanced offer of detached youth work, coordinated across the borough
- A new 'transitions' offer on the Andover estate aimed at local young people aged 11 to 14

The report shares key statistics on reach and engagement in the offer, showcases how providers are achieving outcomes for young people and spotlights the sector-strengthening work that is running alongside delivery to improve the quality and impact of youth work practice. The report combines existing data from providers, new data collected with young people, and interviews and consultations with youth workers and young people to learn more about their stories and the impact that youth work has had on them.



Girls Group - Mary's

We achieve the most impact when we work in partnership. The Young Islington model aims to mobilise the collective energy and resources of all partners across the borough to ensure that young people have equal access to opportunities and networks of support in order to thrive. Young Islington has established two new mechanisms to convene the sector, share opportunities and tackle challenges together, and improve the quality of practice through professional development and tailored support.

## Locality Networks

The Young Islington locality youth networks are interconnected groups of youth services and users that come together to plan and co-ordinate services for young people. They emerged from the need to improve access to opportunities across the borough, to foster strong partnerships between providers, and to respond quickly to needs and gaps within the offer. Extensive consultation, needs assessment and promotion with the youth sector informed the development of the networks, which are independently chaired by a consultant with youth work expertise and coordinated by the council. Each locality also has a youth co-chair – a young person who has experience of living and accessing youth provision in that locality.

Since launching in October 2021, key highlights and successes have included:

- Over 100 sign-ups from providers
- Mapping provision across all localities to identify gaps, which in part led to the formation of the Islington Girls' Supergroup
- Development of the Youth Locality Co-Chair programme, which supports meaningful youth engagement of young people aged 16-19 in the locality networks and compensates young people for their time
- A Day of Action held in May 2022 which reached 64 practitioners and agreed on common priorities and goals (see box on the next page)
- Delivery of training to practitioners around mental health and wellbeing, delivered by Young Minds, attended by over 30 practitioners
- Relaunch of the emotional wellbeing group for young people accessing the universal offer to support practitioners to continue to work in trauma-informed ways and provide space for reflective practice
- Training on LGBTQ+ inclusion delivered by Mosaic, which resulted in 11 referrals by youth workers to Mosaic's services, and specific LGBTQ+ services being delivered at Platform



## Locality Networks Priority Areas

- Preventing and reducing school exclusions and suspensions
- Helping young people stay safe
- Reducing the impact of poverty
- Meeting the needs of girls and young women
- Culturally competent youth work that focusses on challenging inequality

## Quality, Leadership and Impact Partnership

The Quality, Leadership and Impact Partnership (QLIP) is an initiative led by London Youth with Mary's Youth Club, commissioned by Islington Council, to provide wrap-around support to youth organisations and practitioners in the borough. QLIP aims to support high-quality youth work, youth leadership as well as sector leadership by youth practitioners, and improved impact measurement practices across the borough. Providing support to practitioners in this way allows them to in turn improve the quality of the services they provide to young people, and helps establish best practice within Islington's youth sector.

Key highlights and successes include:

- Developing a model and framework for shared impact measurement across the borough, as well as a set of tools that practitioners can use to engage young people directly in impact measurement and data gathering
- Implementing an external supervision programme, enabling senior practitioners from six organisations to access high-quality supervision from other youth workers, giving space to reflect on practice and improve it
- Conducting research on best practices for engaging and supporting young people from minoritized communities including those from Bangladeshi, Turkish, Kurdish and Somali backgrounds
- Supporting six organisations to work towards a London Youth Quality Mark, an established badge of best practice in youth work recognised across the sector
- Enabling three Islington practitioners to gain a place on a funded youth work apprenticeship programme
- Providing one to one support to practitioners on topics including safeguarding, youth work practice, data protection and governance, to ensure organisations work to best practice standards
- Opening over 100 training places on London Youth training courses, and offering bespoke training by Leap Confronting Conflict to Islington practitioners
- Supporting youth leadership across the Locality Networks and beyond, recruiting three locality co-chairs and delivering three sessions of a borough-wide Young Leader's Programme

# HOW WE'RE DEFINING IMPACT

Over the last year, QLIP has been working to develop a shared Impact Measurement Framework with and for youth providers in Islington. This framework aims to generate a picture of how providers are collectively creating impact for young people in Islington. It follows a flexible and adaptable format, allowing practitioners to identify which outcomes they're contributing to, and suggesting indicators to measure and tools with which to do so. The framework is not about comparing providers to one another or evaluating the impact of individual providers. It is about understanding how Islington's diverse and dynamic youth sector works together to achieve goals for young people.

The framework focuses on four key areas and proposes a set of indicators and measurement methods that youth workers can use with young people. This report focuses on four identified outcome areas and shares a range of data generated by providers through their use of various tools and methods.

## Physical and emotional well-being

- Improved physical health
- Improved emotional well-being
- Improved safety and perceptions of safety
- Improved resilience

## Social, emotional and life skills and knowledge

- Improved practical and life skills
- Improved social skills
- Improved self-awareness
- Increased learning

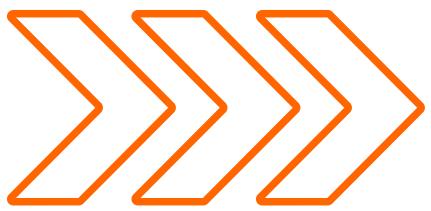
## Sense of agency and motivation

- Increased sense of ownership
- Increased confidence
- Improved aspirations and motivations to do well in education, training and employment

## Connections with networks of support and communities

- Improved connections with others
- Improved connections with communities
- Improved access to services

# IMPACT SNAPSHOT



Figures below relate to activities and providers commissioned by Islington Council between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

**4133**

young people 13+ took part in youth activities

**579**

under 12s engaged in the youth offer

**43%**

engaging in the youth offer for the first time

**49%**

regular participants (attended 5+ times)

**84%**

from the most deprived areas in the borough\*

**23%**

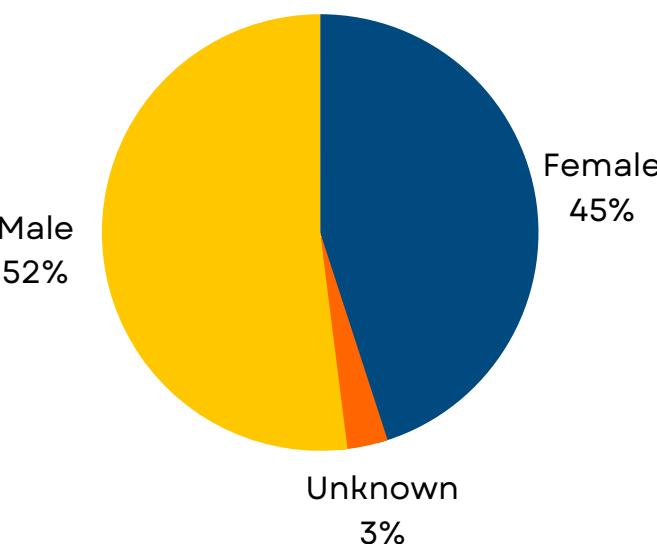
13-19 year olds in the borough attending provision

## Largest youth spaces at a glance

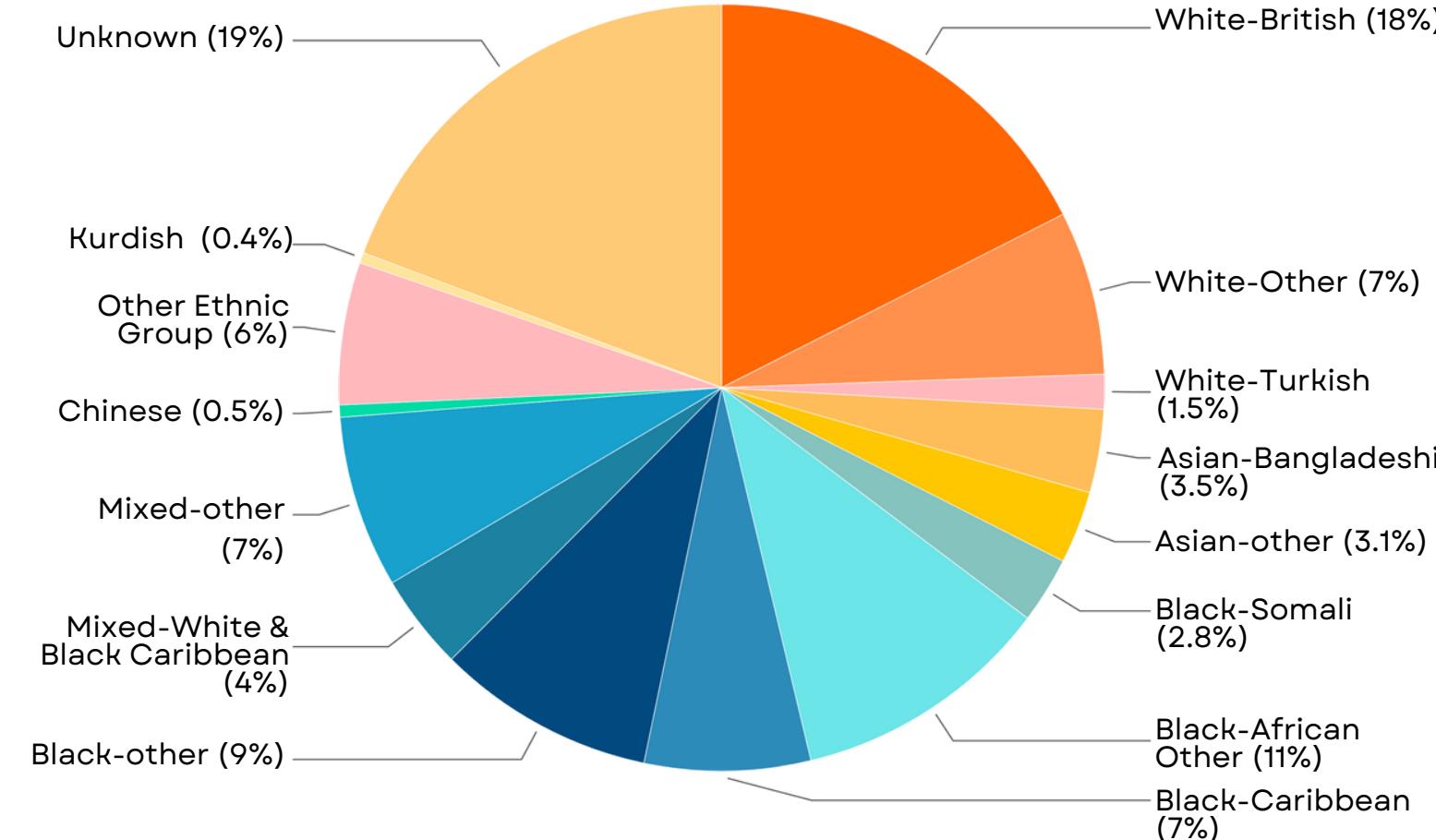
Youth Provision	Users	Participants
Lift	1,909	1,018
SoapBox	690	347
Rose Bowl	203	133
Platform	252	90
The Zone	94	44
Andover Youth Club	83	56

Users are individuals who attended each youth provider.  
Participants are users who attended 5 or more times.

## Gender breakdown, age 13-25



## Ethnicity breakdown, age 13-25\*



## SUMMERVERSITY & LAUNCHPAD 2022

**902**

young people participated

**36**

local organisations delivered courses

**95**

courses and activities offered

**157**

referrals made by social workers and other services\*\*

**670**

young people offered a free meal as part of their course

**136**

awards and qualifications achieved by young people

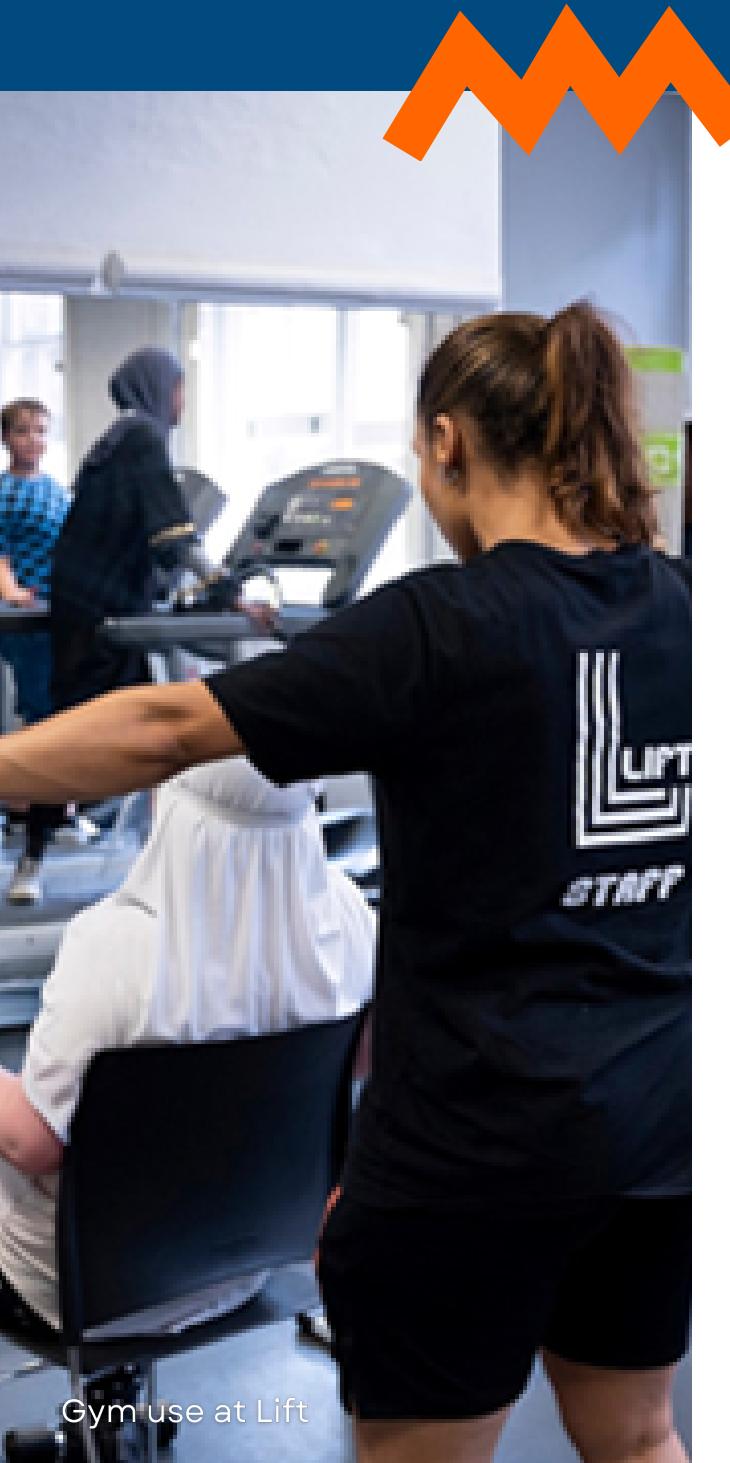
\*83.6% of attendees lived in the top 40% most deprived wards in the borough, as defined by IMD data. 34.4% lived in the top 20% most deprived areas.

\*\*Membership of ethnic categories is self-defined and subjectively meaningful to the person concerned. Young people may self-report under more than one ethnic category. Providing this information is optional, which accounts for the proportion of young people with an unknown ethnicity.

\*\*Referrals into Summerversity came from social workers, Targeted Youth Support, the Wellbeing Team, and Safeguarding and Family Support

# BUILDING A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE OFFER

A key priority of Young Islington's universal offer is to drive improved access to youth work experiences and relationships for a more diverse range of young people. In this section we look at what has already been achieved with and for young people who have historically been underserved by youth work in Islington: young disabled people, girls and young women, those of Turkish, Somali and Bangladeshi backgrounds and young people at transition age between primary and secondary school. We also look at the detached youth work offer in the borough, which seeks to support young people who are not likely to engage at a youth club or centre and who therefore may be more vulnerable to poorer outcomes.



**Lift Youth Hub** works in partnership with Richard Cledesley School to support students with complex needs to link with youth workers and visit the gym once a week, as part of physical activities and social development. The sessions are attended by 5-7 young people with disabilities, including wheelchair users, on a weekly basis.

Twenty young people with additional learning needs or disabilities took part in cooking sessions, games, arts and crafts and multi-sport activities at Lift as part of the Summerversity programme in 2022. Lift youth workers undertook significant work with the young people and parents ahead of the summer, which included an induction and a tour of the building to reassure them and help them to feel comfortable, building lasting relationships and trust. Since the summer, at least six young people have continued their engagement and regularly access the gym, cooking sessions and other activities alongside non-disabled young people. One of the female participants is now a youth councillor and another young woman will be supported to do work experience at Lift over the coming summer.

**Hayward Adventure Playground** is for children with special needs and disabilities and their siblings. The provision also runs a youth club and an after-school club for young people aged between 13 and 25. The staff at Hayward provide parents, carers and wider family members with a range of informal and formal support. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 65 young people aged 13 to 25 with moderate to complex needs attended Hayward. 76% of these young people were regular participants.

Young Islington's universal youth providers work in partnership with local community groups which have strong relationships with **Turkish, Kurdish, Bangladeshi and Somali communities** and work together to design tailored, culturally responsive programmes to encourage young people from these groups to access the wider service offer. This approach provides a good opportunity to work more closely with parents and leaders from underserved communities to dispel any preconceptions about youth clubs and support them to understand how to access the offer.

**Supporting Transitions**  
Young Islington's youth offer prioritises support for young people at the age of transition from primary to secondary education so they develop the confidence and knowledge to access youth work relationships throughout the rest of their teenage years. At this age and stage, vulnerabilities may emerge for some young people leading to them being drawn into negative lifestyles. Data shows a drop off in participation between adventure play and youth work, so the intention is to engage 11 to 14 year olds in spaces and relationships that feel safe for them and through which they can be supported to access the wider Young Islington offer once they are ready.

**New youth space at Andover**  
Young Islington has created a new youth space within the Andover Community Centre, especially for 11 to 14 year olds. The space opened in September 2022 and between then and the end of March 2023, 83 young people have been supported with a high proportion (68%) attending regularly. Every young person has also been offered a hot meal at each session.

**Minority Matters** and **Platform** partnered on a pilot project to engage young Somali people living on the Andover Estate. Culturally specific activities, including traditional dance, henna and Somali language, were delivered from Platform by Minority Matters. Platform youth work staff also ran a series of taster sessions, similar to those on offer during open access youth sessions, including dance, drama, games and tournaments, to encourage the group to access the wider youth club during the week. Their parents were also invited to a session, which gave the Platform staff the opportunity to introduce themselves, show parents around the building and explain the types of activities that are on offer during term time and school holidays. So far, they have engaged 30 young people (15 boys and 15 girls).

**Rose Bowl Youth Centre** works with young people from age 8, in contrast with the rest of the Young Islington universal youth work offer which focuses on young people aged 13 and up. To respond to their specific needs, the Rose Bowl has established a junior youth group exclusively for young people aged 11 to 12 (school years 6, 7 and 8). This allows focus on a diverse range of projects as well as enabling early identification of risks and delivering tailored early support to young people who are more vulnerable to poor outcomes. This work is supported through outreach and building relationships with local schools to increase reach.



Filming at Adventure Playground

### Local play and youth partnerships

Barnard Adventure Playground, Copenhagen Youth Project and local primary schools worked together to improve access to opportunities for local children through a partnership approach. The project, that included a walking bus service, supported over 93 new children to engage in play sessions at Barnard Park Adventure playground. The sessions were co-delivered by staff from the Copenhagen Youth Project to help children get to know and build relationship with youth workers and enable independent and stress-free transition between services when they age out of the play offer. This approach will be replicated at other play sites and youth clubs across the borough.

**Detached youth work** seeks to develop relationships with young people in the spaces and places outside their homes where they choose to spend their spare time. It may take place in parks, on stairwells, on the streets, anywhere where young people meet. Detached youth work has the same intent as centre-based work, the only difference is that it doesn't take place in a building. In Islington, detached youth work is delivered by a range of different providers, focusing on different geographical locations, including those from the voluntary and community sector and the council's Targeted Youth Support service. In January 2023, a new contract, which was awarded to Prospx, was let by the council in order to fill gaps and increase capacity to meet more young people. The cross borough detached offer is now being coordinated through a new council post which will improve communication between different providers, share information more effectively and ensure better geographical coverage. QLIP will be working in the coming year to better understand the impact of detached youth work in the borough and these outputs will be featured in the Young Islington annual impact report 2023/24.



DJ Workshop at Prospx

# PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Improved physical health  
Improved emotional well-being  
Improved safety and perceptions of safety  
Improved resilience

Supporting young people's physical and emotional wellbeing is core to good youth work. For some young people, free physical activity and fitness is what initially draws them into youth services. Once engaged, youth practitioners can promote physical and emotional wellbeing as part of holistic development and growth, and support these young people into other services and programmes. Youth workers build strong trusting relationships with young people over time, and can often identify emerging difficulties and provide early help, avoiding the need for involvement from targeted services.

In interviews with young people, many reflected on how engaging with youth services had improved their health and wellbeing, with several of them particularly sharing how youth workers had helped them to adjust and engage.

"I'm autistic and I have mental health stuff, so it gives me a place that's kinda safe outside my house to socialise with people...it's hard for me to get used to speaking to people who I've never met with, but the staff here are very friendly and very easy to approach."

Young person, Platform



## Navigator Project

After the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a significant rise in the numbers of young people disengaging from education and experiencing anxiety when returning to school. Youth workers played a key role in supporting young people's emotional wellbeing, helping them to manage stress, ease back-to-school anxiety and improve school attendance. The Navigator project, delivered at Rose Bowl in partnership with Isledon's emotional wellbeing workers, used a trauma-informed youth work approach with young people identified as having poor attendance to help them develop confidence, resilience and motivation to re-engage in a sustained way.

"Anna" was attending school only twice a week. She rated her life satisfaction at 3/10, confidence at 3/10 and worthwhile activities at 2/10. She felt she had some good friendships, though her school and her mother worried about her social relationships and she was threatened by a group within school. She often missed Mondays due to disrupted weekend sleeping. Youth workers supported the family to use zones of regulation on difficult mornings, access a sleep consultation and develop a better routine. They also liaised with the school about subject changes to improve her motivation. Following this, she started to attend school more consistently in January. She accessed cooking and games at the youth hub to build confidence and a stable peer group.



Angel Shed is an inclusive theatre company that has been working in Islington since 2004. They use a range of performing arts activities to engage with young people aged 7-19, supporting them to “express themselves, develop confidence, and grow into curious, creative and courageous young people”. Last school year, they worked with 123 young people across their programme: 54% were from historically underserved communities, 63% young women, and 20% with SEND.

Among their 13-19 year old theatre cohort:

- 100% felt included
- 92% said they were given help and support when they needed it
- 96% of parents had seen an improvement in their child's mental health
- 71% had done something that they used to be nervous about (examples included performing solo, talking in front of others, dancing and interacting with an audience).

This positive impact on wellbeing contributes to high retention: their 13-19 year old cohort has been attending Angel Shed for an average of 4.6 years, with more than half of them attending for 5-10 years.

“For most people who don't like being at school or at home, Angel Shed is an escape, somewhere where you can be yourself. It's peaceful, it's a stress-free zone for us teenagers. Most adults think that we can't be stressed out, it's something everyone should acknowledge, that teenagers go through just as much as adults do.”

**Young person, Angel Shed**



## STORIES FROM LIFT

### Oba's story

Oba started attending Lift at age 13 after being given a leaflet at school.

“Being here has got me fit. I always wanted to go to a gym but when I was younger there was nowhere to go and then I discovered Lift - and it was free!... [I do] Boxing, kickboxing, gym, parkour, spoken word and podcasting. Lots of workshops - things like sexual health and relationships and mindfulness and police engagement.”



### Elyse's story

Elyse also started coming to Lift to use the gym.

“Since then I have also done Afrobeats with Patience, an acting workshop, archery, cooking and Summersiversity courses like T-shirt design... [in three years' time I hope] I will either have gone into athletics at a more competitive level or be a sports coach working with young children, or combine the two... Judith is helping me get on a First Aid at Work course and a Gym Instructor Qualification.”



**Read more stories**

Several providers use fitness and physical activity to engage with young people. **Access to Sports** has worked with 200 young people on the Andover Estate through football, basketball, tennis, and a “girls only” club. Alongside sports they provided free lunches and food education. Over 90 young people progressed into additional programmes, including leadership programmes, increasing their teamwork and communication skills, as well as their wellbeing and fitness. Participants in their programmes report not only improving their health and wellbeing, but also making new friends.

For some particularly marginalised young people, youth services provide a more immediately crucial lifeline for their wellbeing. **Gendered Intelligence** is a trans-led community organisation which runs youth groups for young trans and gender non-conforming young people, including groups at Prospect and Caxton House Community Centre. For some young people, feelings of isolation and lack of support can be hugely detrimental to their wellbeing, and being connected into a youth service, meeting other young people with similar experiences and being supported by a youth worker can turn things around for them, as this quote from a young person who attended the Gendered Intelligence summer camp for 11-17 year olds shows.

“I like living now. I've struggled with depression my whole life but now I've seen powerful and loving trans people like me, I see a point in staying alive. All the workers are so inspirational to me, and I want to be alive just so I can be like them one day.”

**Young person, Gendered Intelligence**



# SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND LIFE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Islington's **Summerversity** programme is a key initiative to build young people's skills. Each year, providers offer a range of activities and courses to young people in the borough over the summer holidays, to learn new things, discover new interests and build connections. In 2022, 95 courses were delivered, offering over 70 different activities.

There were 4,699 attendances from 902 individual young people. The range of courses offered included cooking and catering, performing arts, first aid and sports including swimming, cycling and archery. In 2022, 136 qualifications and awards were earned by young people, including National Pool Lifeguard Awards, Swimming Teacher Awards, Emergency First Aid Certificates, and FA Football Referee Qualifications.

- 11 of 15 young people who passed their National Pool Lifeguard Award are now employed at Islington swimming pools
- 9 of 10 young people who gained an STA Swimming Teacher Award are working at Islington swimming pools
- 7 young people who were certified as an SIA Door Supervisor secured work

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Young people gain practical and life skills  
Improved self-awareness  
Improved social skills  
Increased learning

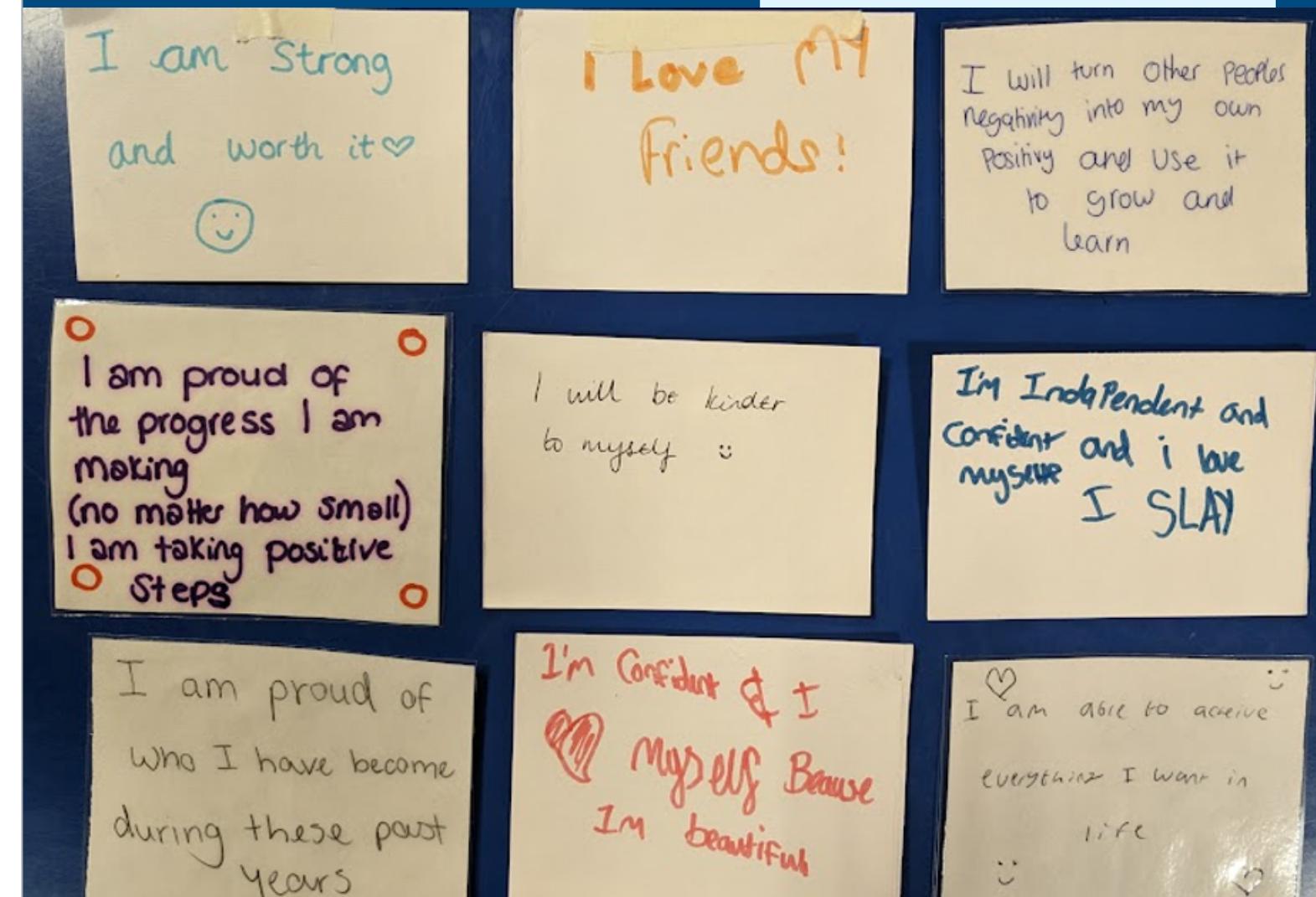
There are a huge range of providers across the borough contributing to both hard (qualifications and accreditations) and soft skills (socio-emotional capabilities) for young people. Lots of providers and young people interviewed for this report focussed on the importance of self-awareness and of young people being able to reflect on their own strengths and on their development journeys.

"I learned how to DJ, I really enjoyed it. It really helps, like sometimes we do DJing at school like it's an actual club. So I joined it and I got to show off a little bit."

**Young person, Elizabeth House**

In interviews, young people from across the borough reflected on how attending youth services had supported their social skills, allowing them to work better in groups, communicate better and become more self-aware.

**Mary's Youth Club** conducted an exercise with young women asking them to make cards about what they loved and appreciated about themselves, getting them to think about themselves in a new way. Observations from the girls focussed on their confidence, their strength, their independence, their ability to achieve their goals, and their hopes for the future. A sample of the girls' affirmations can be seen below.



"Platform's changed me a little bit because I used to be like really antisocial, really closed off, I didn't talk to anyone... so it's opened my eyes to new people, new experiences, new things."

**Young person, Platform**

"My confidence has definitely built up since coming here, because I used to be very antisocial, and now if there's a new member I will always go up and talk to them, try and make them feel included."

**Young person, Mary's**



# I'M PROUD OF...

As part of this report, we captured evidence of impact directly from young people using an activity that encourages young people to reflect specifically on things they have learned in their youth club, or things that they were proud of, and create posters. Responses ranged from hard skills and achievements, to soft skills, to self-confidence and self-belief.

**"Gaining 2 qualifications with PPCP and being able to be a part of the team"**

**"Getting into City of London Academy Islington"**

**"Figuring out my sexuality and coming out to my friends and family"**

**"Learning and sharing my knowledge. And also being the youngest member"**

# I'VE LEARNED...

**"to communicate technical concepts in a clear and understandable way"**

**"to understand different components of a PC and how they work"**

**"to grow my friendship skills and to become more confident in myself"**

**"taking ownership over my mistakes"**



Young people completing the poster activity - Mary's

# SENSE OF AGENCY AND MOTIVATION

Youth work supports young people to develop their learning, education and employment readiness. This includes helping them to identify aspirations, increase motivation to do well in education, training and employment and gain relevant practical skills and experience. Youth workers support young people to develop personal attributes, positive attitudes to work and emotional capabilities such as team working and agency, self-esteem and ability to manage emotions and persevere when setbacks occur. They also offer leadership opportunities within the organisation, to support young people to play a role in the services they receive.

Through interviews and discussions with young people, the idea of having ownership over the youth club space was continuously raised as something that young people really valued. Young people felt that time spent in a youth provision was time where they could make their own decisions and fully express themselves. Having this “third space” other than home or school, where young people could make choices about their engagement, is really important. This sense of agency and motivation, and the ability to envision other paths for themselves, is crucial for young people’s development.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Sense of ownership within youth work  
Increased confidence  
Improved aspirations and motivation to do well in education, training and employment (ETE)

At SoapBox, young people are central in shaping, directing and delivering services. One young leader from SoapBox said:

“Before any decision is made, we obviously, we talk about it and yeah they get everyone's thoughts about what they're about to do or what they're gonna do. Communication is always there, it's key when it comes to SoapBox.”

**Young person, SoapBox**



“My personal opinion... In life for some minorities the roads are either jail or death. But we're living proof that we're not that. We're not on either of those roads.”

**Young person, Platform**



## PICTURE THIS

QLIP designed a creative session that used photography to engage young people in discussions about their future. Young people were asked to share a photograph or drawing that represented their experience at their youth provision, another that represented something they were proud of and a third that represented where they saw themselves in the future. After sharing the photos, youth practitioners led young people in a group conversation about why they chose the photos.

Images chosen by young people reflected a real range of feelings and thoughts about the future. Some shared concepts like balance, innovation and new experiences, and financial stability. Others shared ambitions including career goals (getting a job in the City, becoming a teacher) and personal goals (getting a driving licence, becoming more physically fit, visiting Mecca). Some chose photos of themselves participating in activities that they hadn't done before, such as camping, cheerleading, and cooking. Young people have a massive breadth and depth of goals, ambitions and reasons for visiting youth provision that change over time. It's key that youth work relationships and provision can adapt to these changing needs of young people, helping them to identify what their goals are and how to achieve them.



## The 21st Century Skills (21CS)

programme is an employability project based at Elizabeth House aimed at young people who are disadvantaged, with low qualifications, no network, unemployed or economically inactive. It supports young people into employment through flexible IT training, work experience and practical work-placements. Results from their 2022 programme are on the right.

## Isledon Arts CIC's FirstWorks

programme has been specifically designed to build young peoples' employability skills and confidence in a youth work informed context. Young people who attend Lift or Rose Bowl are frequently recruited into FirstWorks roles, completing the cycle from youth participant to helping deliver the services they once experienced. Young people are supported to try out several roles connected to youth service delivery as well as Isledon's conferencing and meeting business, and include front of house, customer service, kitchen and booking assistants, all paid at London Living Wage. Young people who have taken part in the programme often progress to more senior roles within Isledon or mentor the next generation of recruits. In October 2022, 40 young people attended a FirstWorks assessment day. This resulted in 14 being recruited into roles. Those that were not offered a role were provided with support and introduced to partners with vacancies available. Isledon is continuing to support the training and development of their recruits, including offering a bookings apprenticeship and gym instructor training.

104 young people enrolled	71 obtained qualifications
25 secured paid employment	88% came from underserved communities

### Melissa's story

Melissa has been going to **Lift Youth Hub** for five years.

"I was very shy and withdrawn when I first came here and now I can't stop talking! It's really increased my confidence and given me contacts and a network. Youth workers have also introduced me to a different career path - I saw how I could work in the community as a profession. I have now been a grantmaker with Islington Giving and also been a youth councillor with Islington Council. I have been given media experience - I was interviewed by Vanessa Feltz for a BBC radio programme."



[Read more stories](#)



At **Rose Bowl**, youth workers have joined together with Isledon's Wellbeing Team to provide dedicated one to one employment support for young people looking for jobs. This has been offered as part of wraparound emotional support, as a young person's employment status or job-readiness contributes to their emotional and mental wellbeing (and vice versa).

Young people are supported to explore and improve their skills, interests and motivations for seeking work. They also get practical help around CV writing, job applications, financial literacy, and available training or qualification pathways. Staff connect young people with part-time jobs, volunteering and work experience and provide support with applying for grants and benefits.

"You've got all sorts of people that come into youth clubs, you build friendships and connections, and if you've got some sort of concern, or you need help with something in particular like building up your CV, there's always a way to kind of get that help."

**Young person, SoapBox**



"There's workshops about how to go to job interviews, making your CV, how to conduct yourself in a work environment, even stuff how to make your own business and make money"

**Young person, Platform**



Since the launch in February 2023, 15 young people have received tailored support and follow-up appointments, and several have been supported to interview for roles. One has secured an apprenticeship with Islington Council and one is being funded by Isledon to complete gym instructor training while also running boxing sessions at **Lift** and **Rose Bowl**.



Positive affirmations - Mary's

# CONNECTIONS WITH NETWORKS OF SUPPORT AND COMMUNITIES

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Improved connections with others  
Improved connections with communities  
Improved access to services

A key principle of youth work, as laid out in the IYW's Code of Ethics is supporting young people's "participation and active involvement in society". This means that the impact of youth work should go beyond the youth club, into how young people interact with their peers, families and communities. In this report we understand community to be not only the local area, but also other types of community that are not geographical – for example, a young LGBTQ+ person becoming engaged with LGBTQ+ networks from which they can seek support.

**Gendered Intelligence**, which provides specialist support for trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming young people, has a unique role to play in connecting young people to networks of support and communities. This quote from a young person who participated in their summer camp programme in 2022 demonstrates this.

"I didn't have irl [in real life] friends before camp and now I do! I was able to connect with people in person and now hopefully I can carry these relationships on outside of camp. I managed to find how far or close people lived and there are lots of ideas floating around of how we can stay in contact and do things together."

Young Person, Gendered Intelligence

For some young people who are new to Islington, a youth club can be an important source of support and friends as they settle in.

### Pasha's story

Pasha moved to London from Ukraine in October 2022.

"It has helped me to be happy. To be part of a team and I have made friends from this. **Lift** has helped me settle in to London and get better at English. I only had a few words when I came here from Ukraine in October."



**Read more stories**

In response to the need to continue creating safe spaces for young women in the borough, local providers teamed together to form the **Islington Girls' Supergroup**. Stemming from a mapping exercise of girls' work and the Locality Networks day of action in May 2022, youth workers from **Mary's** and **Prospect** teamed up with other providers including **Highbury Roundhouse** to create a network to better streamline provision and ensure that young women have a supportive network across the borough. Practitioners meet bi-monthly to share updates on their programmes and delivery and visit one another to bring girls into new youth work centres and meet other young people, including running taster sessions. This connected approach has enabled girls to be exposed to activities and opportunities outside of their regular youth club, for example cheerleading, dance, sports, and a session on domestic abuse delivered by **Cripplegate** that reached over 40 girls and young women.

"Here there's like a pathway in terms of, alright cool you're doing music production with us, you can then go into college and do like a further education in terms of understanding even more about it... there's like a designation in terms of, you're doing this with us, this is what it can lead you to. Whereas other youth centres will just have, 'okay here's what we have' and that's pretty much it."

Young Person, SoapBox

Interviews with young people also demonstrate the unique forms of support and care that they receive from youth practitioners, and how attending a youth service has supported them to make new friends, and find out about other services and opportunities in the borough that they didn't know about before.



One young person we spoke to reflected on how a support worker had recommended they start attending a youth club in order to build more connections and become more social.

"Because I didn't really like going out so much, didn't like talking to people, I just never went. And one of my mates who did come here mentioned it... nearly every time I met her she was like 'did you go to St Mary's' and I would say 'no'. So I came a few weeks ago I believe, and ever since then I've been coming here every Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. I'm a bit more social with everyone, and I talk to a lot more people... Normally after college I would just be in the house, I wouldn't go out... but now I'm even rushing back home from the college to make sure I'm here on time."

Young Person, Mary's

# CONCLUSION

This report shares stories and examples from across the borough of how a dynamic, diverse and inclusive youth offer supports young people to improve their physical and emotional wellbeing, build their socio-emotional skills, improve their sense of agency and motivation, and connect to their communities.

These stories represent a small sample of the work that happens with young people in Islington every day. We know that high-quality, accessible youth work can change lives. It helps young people grow, develop, learn about themselves and step out of their comfort zone. It provides access to new experiences, and reveals possibilities and pathways that may have been invisible before. Trusted youth work relationships also provide a vital lifeline and source of support, guidance and advice for young people as they navigate growing up in London.

Looking ahead, Young Islington's universal youth work offer will continue to work with stakeholders from across the borough to ensure that we provide a responsive, effective offer to all young people.



# GET INVOLVED

Over the 2023-24 year, Young Islington priority areas include:

- Engaging more young people in the universal offer, to build back to exceed pre-Covid attendance levels
- Establishing the new enhanced detached offer and gathering evidence on the impact of detached youth work
- Continuing to make the offer more accessible and inclusive, increasing the diversity of young people attending universal provision and supporting practitioners to engage underserved communities effectively
- Supporting youth organisations to better measure the impact of their work, and engage young people as active participants in impact measurement

All providers delivering services to young people in Islington are invited to engage with the Locality Networks and QLIP. Here's how to get involved:

Get support with measuring your impact and contribute to future impact reports

**CLICK HERE**

Explore the impact measurement framework further

**CLICK HERE**

Engage with a community of practice for critical inquiry and reflective practice

**CLICK HERE**

Join your Locality Network and work in partnership

**CLICK HERE**

Get in touch with QLIP to get one to one support

**CLICK HERE**

Participate in the training and support available for Islington providers

**CLICK HERE**

visit [www qlip org uk](http://www qlip org uk)

# TOGETHER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**London Youth**  
[www.londonyouth.org](http://www.londonyouth.org)

**Mary's**  
[www.marys.org.uk](http://www.marys.org.uk)

**Islington Play and Youth**  
<https://www.islington.gov.uk/young-people>

