



Katie – age 18

YMCA TAYSIDE

Now I Can

When I was leaving school, my careers advisor told me about the Y. I got 3 months of one-to-one support there - to help me build my CV and work out what I wanted to do next. I worked with a youth worker who was just a year older than me. She really listened to me and I felt like I was understood. With her help, I applied for a 'Next Steps' course at Perth College. One of the course requirements was to get experience of volunteering so I asked if I could volunteer back at the Y. That felt like less of a step into the unknown because I knew the people and they were nice.

I think the youth work team make it easy for me to step into new responsibilities as a volunteer because they give me choices and options they are so friendly and approachable – you know that they are always there for you. At the beginning, when I saw senior members of the team interacting with the young people I thought 'I could never do that'. Now I can.

Looking back, I can see how my confidence has grown through volunteering. At school I didn't want to work with anyone else because it was difficult for me to talk to people I didn't know. When I first went to college, we were asked to do a piece of group work. I was dreading it – I felt ill thinking about it. But this year, on my science course, I feel fine about working in groups. I'm bringing the confidence I've got from volunteering with different people and personalities, and I'm happy to voice my opinion in groups. Recently, at college, I've noticed that I've begun to support other students when we are working in a team – drawing on what I know about them to help them contribute too.

I decided to stay on as a volunteer at the Y after I'd met the requirement for my college course. I think the support that is offered through the Y-Girls programme is so important. I can see myself at the same age in those girls, especially the quieter ones, and I'm glad the Y is there for them. It's great to see them make progress. I wish I'd had that support at the same age.