



Lily – age 19

YMCA TAYSIDE

Playing to my Passions

I first came to the Y when I was 16 and I'd recently left school. I came to some drop-in sessions and the youth workers helped me put together my CV. It was a good experience, but I drifted away for a while after that. Some time later, the youth worker that I'd worked with contacted me and asked me to volunteer at a one-day Y-Games event. He knew I was interested in photography and the volunteering opportunity was about creating a visual record of the day. I was in two minds about it. I even remember pacing about outside the building trying to decide whether or not to go in. I felt anxious, but, in the end, my sense of loyalty to the youth worker made me take my first step, and I have never looked back. A lot of the volunteering I do now has a creative digital or design element to it. The team at the Y understand my strengths and they are good at finding opportunities for me that play to my passions.

Nowadays I'm trusted to take on more responsibility and I feel fully a part of a fantastic team of staff and volunteers. Volunteering is just as much work as a paid job, but it feels like you are really cared for in your role. Over time, I feel like the youth workers have grown to trust my ability, but that doesn't mean they would leave me high and dry. They are always there to offer help if I need it.

Alongside my weekly volunteering commitment, the team at the Y connected me to the Prince's Trust Team programme – a 12-week personal development programme that included an opportunity to take a digital printing course. I've used what I learned to build a small business, printing custom T-shirts for organisations and events. Because I'm a carer, I can't work full time at the moment, but a combination of my volunteering experience and the printing business is helping me to grow my skills for work in the future.

As a result of my volunteering experiences I'm more of a leader in whatever I am doing now. I'll much more happily step into a decision-making role. I enjoy coming up with ideas and taking the initiative to put them into action, and I'm used to working to deadlines and making sure that everyone is clear on their part to play. I feel the youth work team are alongside me at every step, valuing my strengths and wanting and expecting me to continue to grow.