

YOUTH WORK IN ISLINGTON

IMPACT REPORT

2023/24

INTRODUCTION



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Pictures:

Top: Youth work on the XLP Bus

Middle: Waiting to climb, Mary's Residential

Bottom: Playing Fifa at Soapbox

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Welcome to the second annual Youth Work in Islington Impact Report. This report seeks to share a picture of how the Young Islington universal youth offer is supporting young people in the borough to ensure they are rooted in a community where they feel safe, can thrive and are able to be part of and lead the change in line with our Youth Safety Strategy 2020 – 25 and our Islington Together strategy 2030. We share the journeys and stories of young people accessing youth services in the borough and explore how youth work experiences and relationships impacted on their lives and what they valued the most while engaging in the youth offer.

Every provision that has contributed to this report looks different, from targeted support, to less formal approaches such as open access and detached. However, each provision supports young people with the four life outcomes explored in this report.

In the second year of publication this report focuses on the transitions young people are navigating, with a particular focus on the transition from primary to secondary education that for many young people marks the beginning of this period and can set the tone for the rest of their adolescence.

Youth Voice has been central to this report. Young People from across Islington shared their experiences and opinions through a range of activities facilitated by youth workers, volunteers, and other young people.

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.





Adolescence is a time of change, a time when children explore what it means to be an adult. Friendships, family and relationships change, young people ask themselves ‘Who am I?’ and start to decide what they want their futures to be like. In the Art of Youth Work Kerry Young tells us that “Youth Work youth is an exercise in moral philosophy in the sense that it enables and supports young people to ask and answer the central question of self-‘what sort of person am I?’” With so many transitions to navigate during the teenage years, youth work offers a consistent safe space for young people.

Rosebowl is a unique centre offering both a play and youth offer, and the dedicated team have lots of experience supporting transition age young people.

Clive, Youth Work Manager at Rosebowl, highlighted their successful approach for this age group as:

- Creating a dedicated space for transition age young people
- Focusing on activities and skills based workshops
- Encouraging young people to take ownership of the youth offer
- Having relaxed discussions about interpersonal skills and behaviour
- Working closely with parents, carers, and schools
- Above all, offering a listening ear and respecting the pace of the young people’s development

They're finding their identity and want that distinct level of independence where they're saying to themselves “Well, we aren't kids anymore and we don't wanna be around the 8, 9 and 10 year olds.”

In how they act they’re almost like young mini adults, so the things they want to do are different. But when you think about it, it is from such a young age that our decisions make a huge difference, and so it's about really setting that trajectory.



Clive Tachie
Youth Work Manager
Rosebowl

Insight from Clive and other Islington based youth workers, is featured throughout this report alongside the voices of the young people they support.

A DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIVE OFFER

This report focuses 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, SoapBox, RoseBowl, the Zone as well as more local, community focused provision operating throughout the year

- The Young Islington Locality Network
- The Quality, Leadership and Impact Partnership (QLIP)
- An enhanced offer of detached youth work, coordinated across the borough
- A 'transitions' offer on the Andover estate aimed at local young people aged 11 to 14
- A new youth club on Elthorne Estate for local young people who may require additional support to access the range of opportunities available across the wider offer
- Summerversity

Over the last year we continued our focus on reaching and supporting young people who have historically been underserved by youth work in Islington and those who may be vulnerable to poorer outcomes: young people with additional learning needs and disabilities, girls and young women, those of Turkish, Somali and Bangladeshi backgrounds, young people at the transition age and those who are living in more deprived wards or households in the borough.



Learning names at a residential - Mary's

The Enhanced Detached Offer

We have launched an enhanced 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.

Prospex has been engaging and supporting young people across the wards of Bunhill, Clerkenwell, Mildmay, Tufnell Park, Finsbury Park, and the Elthorne Estate. The teams have worked in a flexible way to enable a range of positive interactions and connections with young people, parents, and other youth services based in the localities. By working in partnership with other providers and services including **Jigsaw**, **Copenhagen Youth Project** and **Targeted Youth Support**, the team have increased young people's confidence to attend existing provisions. This partnership approach to the work has also provided opportunities to strengthen the emerging relationships with young people, particularly during the winter months when weather conditions would otherwise limit engagement.

Since the start of the offer the team have had over **1932** engagements with young people in designated areas. An engagement is defined as having had a conversation either to introduce the team or a more in depth discussion about young people's needs and interests.

Physical activities such as bowling, football and basketball tournaments have been great tools to connect with young people, and encourage them to focus on their physical and emotional wellbeing. The team have been able to support young people to access these including through providing necessary equipment such as boots and shin pads for young people attending the 'Play on the Pitch' day at Arsenal stadium.

Trips have also proven popular, and by utilising cafe's and other warm spaces the team have been able to have significant conversations with young people in need of support.

A notable instance being when the team supported a young person who had left college due to poor mental health to explore their options, and write a letter requesting support and advice to the college while making use of wifi in a local cafe.



Go Karting Trip - Prospex

Focus on the North

Recognising the need for greater youth provision in the north of Islington in April we appointed a new local youth provider to deliver a youth offer specifically aimed at young people who wish to access a youth work support and opportunities in the north of the borough. The new offer called **Finsbury Fusion Youth Club** is available from the **Collective Acting Studio (CAS)**, previously known as **Platform** on a Friday, and from the **Andover Community Centre** on a Monday. During the transition period the youth workers teamed up with **Highbury Roundhouse** to offer an additional open access session from a recently refurbished community centre. To support the transition, the youth team also partnered with **TYS** to offer one to one coaching to young people and ensure young people are linked up with supportive professionals.

Elthorne Youth Club

We also opened a new youth space on Elthorne Estate in October 2023. The youth club is a collaborative partnership between **Elthorne Pride**, **Prospex** and **Islington Council** and it was launched to provide support for young people living on the Elthorne estate, who were affected by the traumatic events that had taken place in the area in the past. Since the launch, the youth club engaged over **60** individual young people connecting them with positive activities and support of trusted youth workers. The project coproduced with young people offers DJ workshops, boxing, First Aid training, bowling trips as well as issue-based sessions addressing specific needs raised by young people such as safety awareness, relationships, mental-health and wellbeing. Healthy snacks are provided at each session. Young people are also supported to access the range of support available across the wider offer such as opportunities at some of the larger youth spaces and referrals into Islington's Brighter Futures early help programme.

“I have learnt a lot over this period, I've met lots of new people and I have gone outside of my comfort zone. I have really enjoyed attending the Highbury Roundhouse as the staff and young people there have been super friendly and welcoming to us. I feel like I have found another safe space that I can go when I'm not at school”

- **Young Person, youth session at CAS**

“I feel the more targeted sessions on a Friday have suited me better, as there is less drama and distractions for me to get involved in, so I can have more quality time to talk with my youth workers about things that are going on in my life”

- **Young Person, youth session at CAS**

“I like coming here because it's a place where young, like-minded people can come together to have fun, relax, and enjoy various activities. It also has given me many opportunities to learn whilst having fun, for example when people from St Johns Ambulance came and taught us CPR”

- **Young Person, Elthorne**

Andover Youth Club

In its second year of operations engaged **106** young people from the Andover and Finsbury Park area with over **80%** of members attending regularly.

The youth club provides a broad programme of activities for young people aged 11 to 14, with a strong focus on those who may not have come across youth work support before and may need more tailored help. For the second year young people have benefited from safe space to engage in recreational activities, learning, and socialising. Youth workers have provided a consistent, positive influence for young people including those who may be at risk of being exploited and drawn into serious youth violence and other criminal activity. Building on the success of the last two years, in 2024 the Andover youth provision has been expanded to provide positive activities as well as employment and further education related advice and guidance for older young people age 14 and beyond in a new session on a Monday evening.

Targeted Youth Support (TYS) Transition to Secondary School project

The TYS transitions project offers one to one and group support to young people at the transition age (yr 6 and yr7) to improve school attendance and boost young people's confidence, self-esteem and overall wellbeing. The project also offers online and face to face training and advice for parents around attending meetings and reviews, advocating and mediating, support on housing issues and counselling support.

Last year the project engaged **48** young people providing a total of **307** one to one sessions and **41** group work sessions. Evaluation has shown that the project has had positive impact on young people behaviour, attendance and engagement and making more positive choices.

Parents feedback was extremely positive with over **95%** stating they felt more able to advocate for themselves and their children. The team have engaged over **520** year 6 students across primary schools in workshops covering key topics including; friendship groups, peer pressure, and safety. **28** young people engaged in summer activities including 5 trips and 2 workshops with positive feedback on young people's communication skills, confidence, and aspirations. One of the highlights this year were online webinars on mental health co-produced with the Parent Empowerment Champions.

Transitions from play to youth services

In the past year, we've seen some great partnership work between adventure playgrounds and the local youth clubs such as Three Corners, Lift, CYP, and Barnard AP to support young people who age out of the play offer to transition smoothly to the local youth spaces.

Thanks to these effective collaborations almost a quarter* of young people who were adventure playgrounds users in the previous year have transitioned to a youth club in 2023/24.

This is an 8% increase compared to 2022-23, and 11% compared to 2021-22: demonstrating an upward trend in facilitating a smooth transition between play and youth services.

* 22.6%

NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Young Islington Network

Young Islington Network has been piloting a new approach to increase the involvement of youth organisations and young people in setting the strategic direction of the network. To ensure ownership and amplify young people's voice and influence the network will be driven by its members from chairing, to identifying the networks priorities, projects and decision-making processes, fully utilising rich knowledge and expertise of our young people and the youth sector. This new phase of the network aims to increase partnership working and strategic planning by bringing the existing resources together to address gaps and bring in additional funding by looking to external opportunities.

As a result, a newly formed steering group will be determined to:

- Coproduce strategic aims for the network
- Identify roles and responsibilities including chairing **by young people**
- Establish decision-making process to allocate funding
- Create a collaborative delivery plan

To get involved contact : sharareh.avazzadeh2@islington.gov.uk

Youth Voice and Leadership

Young Islington is committed to developing a youth sector that is truly shaped and influenced by young people. That means young people working in partnership with the network, being involved in leadership and decision making and being supported and equipped with the skills to lead the change they want to see.

On 9th May 2024 the network ran a very successful youth engagement event working with 40 young people across 11 organisations who gave their views on the issues affecting them and the skills and knowledge they require to be leaders and decision makers. As a result young people will be able to more directly influence the networks design, plan its priorities and participate in shaping and driving the work of the network.

Some of the key themes identified to support young people's leadership were:

- Promoting and communicating opportunities for young people to take a role in decision making
- Ensuring young people have access to equipment such as laptops and the internet
- Aligning the activities with transferable skills that support young people to access future education, training and employment opportunities

Quality, Leadership and Impact Partnership (QLIP)

The QLIP initiative, established in 2021 and commissioned by Islington Council is a partnership led by London Youth with Mary's Youth Club that supports practitioners in Islington with a range of professional development activities.

During the last 12 months the QLIP team have liaised with 58 organisations across the borough to enable access to training, supervision, action learning sets, impact measurement support, partnership opportunities and bespoke support.

Training highlights from the last year include:

- Managing conflict and trauma responses facilitated by LEAP Confronting Conflict
- First Aid delivered by Mary's
- Supporting Autistic Young People delivered by Resources for Autism.

Although some of the challenges faced by youth organisations are universal, the team recognise that practice is unique and different organisations require different kinds of support. As of December 2023 the QLIP team have focused on bespoke support to best utilise our resources, and on enabling connections for practitioners in the borough and beyond, along with ongoing community led supervision for senior practitioners and managers.

“supervision created a trickle down effect within the organisation embedding reflective practice” – Youth Practitioner

A recent standout was a 'Coffee with QLIP' session in March that focused on how to support young people who observe the holy month of Ramadan in different youth settings.

We heard from practitioners with lived experience about what to look out for during this month, and practitioners asked questions and shared suggestions about how they could adapt their provisions to ensure Muslim young people felt recognized, safe and celebrated during this time.

“I will use what I learnt about young people practicing Ramadan and use it on some of my sessions.” – Youth Practitioner

[Learn more about QLIP](#)

HOW WE'RE DEFINING IMPACT

Since the publication of the 2022/23 Impact Report in June 2023, QLIP has been working with youth practitioners to support impact measurement in different youth provisions. Utilising the impact framework to identify shared outcomes, and then tailoring data collection tools appropriate to the activities available at each service. By embedding one framework across multiple parts of the offer we aim to continuously build a picture of how providers are collectively creating impact for young people in Islington.

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, including case studies, interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and creative activities such as community mapping.

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 2023 and 31 March 2024.

4412

young people took part in youth activities

513

under 12s engaged in the youth offer

39%

engaging in the youth offer for the first time

55%

regular participants (attended 5+ times)

84%

live in the most deprived areas in the borough*

23%

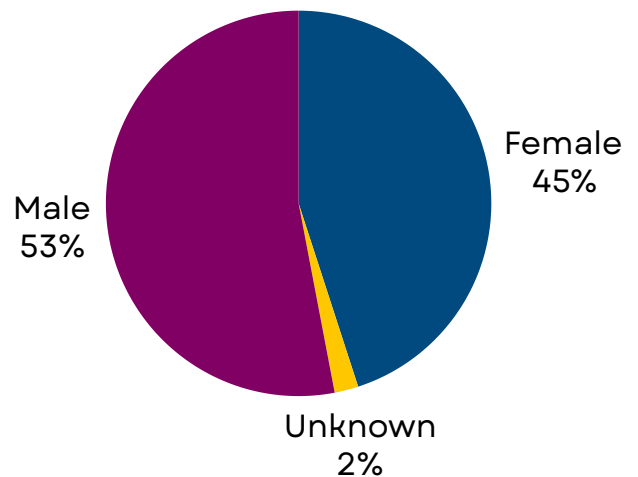
13-19 year olds in the borough attending provision

Largest youth spaces at a glance

Youth Provision	Users	Participants
Lift	2122	1056
Soapbox	808	498
Rose Bowl	241	133
Andover Youth Club	106	77
The Zone	72	43
Platform	347	114

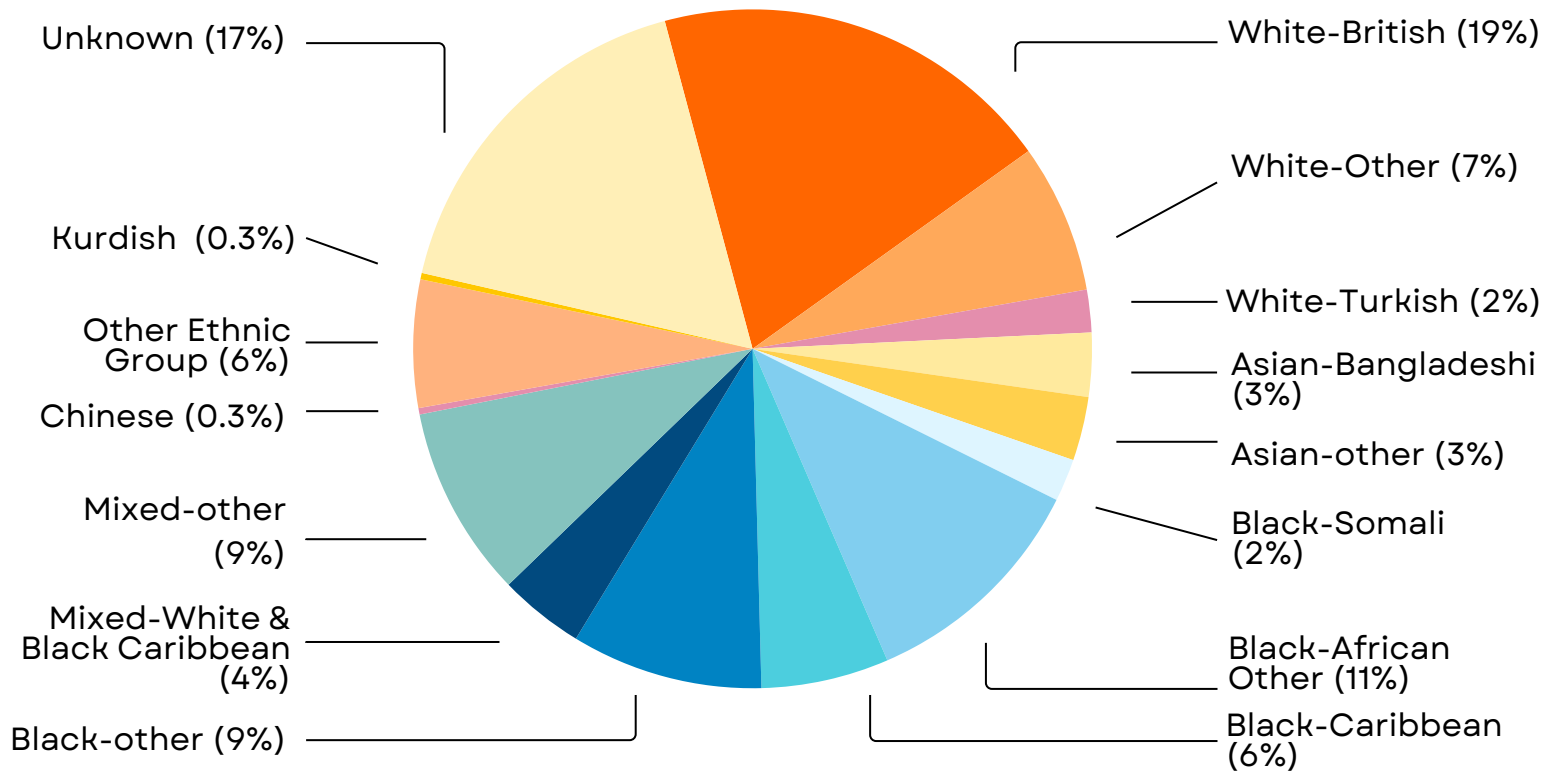
Users are individuals who attended each youth provider. Participants are users who attended 5 or more times.

Gender breakdown, age 13-25



*83.7% of attendees lived in the top 40% most deprived wards in the borough, as defined by IMD data.

Ethnicity breakdown Youth and Play age 13-25*



SUMMERVERSITY & LAUNCHPAD 2023

967

young people participated

106

courses and activities offered

769

young people offered a free meal as part of their course

181

referrals made by social workers and other services**

*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

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

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

Across the board physical and emotional health are central to youth work practice. Young people's mental health services are in high demand and the impacts of extended time out of school and heightened anxiety during the pandemic are still being felt.

Angel Shed encourages young people to participate in performing arts activities including theatre, dance, and music from as young as 7 years old. The team work to create an inclusive space where those of all abilities are welcomed and encouraged. Young people express that they feel safe to be themselves (86%), included (94%), and listened to (98%).

“Because it’s sorta in a way like therapy since there are no negative comments passed around and you don’t have to worry about being yourself”

– **Young Person, Angel Shed**



When completing a community mapping activity with young people at **Mary's youth centre**, young people shared concerns for safety in their local areas, identifying a need for

“More youth clubs, even if they're small, I'd like if more were scattered around in different areas”

– **Young Person, Mary's.**

Physical and emotional safety was a consistently important theme for young people, with the non-judgemental and consistent spaces offered by youth work contributing to young people's sense of overall safety and emotional resilience. Those that were asked questions about it, explicitly share that they feel they can trust their youth workers and know they will be supported with any issues they might have.

The need for safe and accessible spaces for young people was identified across the borough. Young people attending the **XLP** youth bus shared that they wanted the bus to be open more often, and for other social spaces to be available to them. XLP's mobile youth bus is a portable youth hub that can be taken into local communities and provides a range of engaging activities like gaming, cooking, discussions, sports and trips.

Young People's thoughts on how youth spaces support their emotional wellbeing

“The staff create a relaxing space to have fun and be sociable”

– **Young Person, Elthorne Youth Hub**

“I've learnt to not worry about what others think”

– **Young Person, Targeted Youth Support**

“I learnt how to express my own feelings”

“Mindful Gratitude”

“I learnt how to control my emotions”

– **Young People, Prospex**

“I feel confident and safe. I feel definitely safe. So I definitely share my problems and, um, ask how I can solve it and how they can help.”

– **Young Person, Soapbox**



Increased resilience can be a more complex indicator to capture, requiring a high level of self-awareness and reflection from young people with these factors are also influenced by their maturity. By asking questions about wellbeing, managing emotions and their attitude to challenges, youth workers support young people to recognise their own resilience.

Young people clearly identify learning more about their emotions, how to manage their wellbeing, and trust that they will be able to face the challenges life brings. For young people transitioning to new schools and alternative provisions, this increased self-awareness and recognition supports them to navigate the boundaries and expectations of new environments, safe in the knowledge that their youth workers will offer a supportive listening ear, or the opportunity to kick a football around the pitch and be present in the moment.

“We have more time to address and challenge and support young people in a way that they may appreciate.” **Clive, Rosebowl**

Young People at **Mary’s Youth Centre** shared that they had learned how to **‘be calm’**, and **‘resilient’**. When asked how attending Mary’s made them feel, young people shared that they felt happy, safe, confident, joyful and proud.



Stories from Young People

“Due to the fact that Soapbox has given me advice for my behaviour, it has led to me being in general, just happier.

I've also pushed my body more to the limits and going to different gym has even made me more happier and just me just studying about music and tech. Even that has made me happier.

I mean, there might be some bumpy roads and whatnot, but I do get past it and I do feel pleased when I get past it.”

– **Young Person, Soapbox**



Tilly-May’s Story

Tilly-May (12) has been attending Rosebowl since she was 8 years old

At the centre she plays football, dodgeball and basketball with Access to Sports, alongside accessing other activities such as art and cooking.

“I like what they do here. It's fun. The staff here help you. Like when people get angry they will calm things down. There is always something to do here.”



[Read more from Tilly-May](#)



FOCUS ON LGBTQ+



Young people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or Questioning, sometimes find accessing free and safe spaces to do physical activities in their communities more challenging.

Many gym facilities are bookable for a fee, and young people will not necessarily have the resources, or feel safe to access these themselves. Whilst there are specialist services dedicated to supporting these young people, open access provisions play a key role in ensuring that young people can access a wide range of activities. Access to sports and other physical activities is highlighted by young people as a reason they attend youth provisions. In Islington, where there are few green spaces, gym facilities at youth centres play a big role in supporting young people's wellbeing.

As an open access space, at **Lift** all young people are encouraged to lead on which activities they do and how the centre works.

Young people welcome newcomers at reception, lead on developing podcasts, and encourage other young people to get involved with what's on offer.

Because the team foster a culture of openness to discussions, young people asked to start an open group called 'Purple Therapy' where they can have challenging discussions and resolve conflicts with the support of the youth work team.

The youth workers are present as young people seek to understand their gender identity, their sexuality, and how to have safe, positive relationships.

One stand out story is an LGBTQ+ young person who the team have seen go from being reserved, angry and closed off, to becoming happier with themselves, and making use of all the activities. Even inviting other friends to create podcasts and use the gym together to support their emotional wellbeing.



Boxing at Mary's gym

“What happens here is those young people are able to have their own spaces and create their own groups.”

- **Judith, Lift**

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND LIFE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

In the midst of the many challenges facing young people, youth work offers opportunities for young people to increase their self-awareness, expand their social skills, and learn new things. Young people across Islington spoke about what they had learnt over the last year.

When asked to identify the skills they had developed as a result of participating in the youth offer, young people from a range of provisions reflected that they had learnt:

- communication skills,
- teamwork,
- sports leadership,
- coaching,
- presenting and public speaking,
- time management,
- creative writing,
- budgeting,
- IT skills

Evidence provided from young people's surveys collected at: **Highbury Roundhouse, Mary's Youth Centre, Mildmay, Minority Matters, Platform, Prospex, Targeted Youth Support, & XLP**

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

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

Many of these skills are essential for success in education and employment. For young people transitioning to secondary education developing self awareness about their interests and skills can help set their trajectory for future decisions such as choosing their GCSE options. Youth work plays a key role in providing opportunities both to develop existing skills sets, and to try new things.

“But specifically with them (transition age) we have to really listen to what they're asking for and respond to that as much as we can.

But also we challenge them out of their comfort zone.”

- Clive, Rosebowl

Youth workers encourage young people to 'have a go' at new activities, and many provisions introduce young people to inspiring adults who are experts in their relative careers, broadening their horizons for future employment.

The **Summerversity** programme provides opportunities for young people to learn new skills during the summer holidays. The courses are free to attend and held at a range of provisions across the borough. As well as learning new skills on specific courses young people meet new people, make connections in their communities, and practice key life skills such as time management and forward planning.

Summerversity Overview

- **4662 attendances**
- **32 local organisation delivering**
- **Over 166 accreditations gained**

Activities this year included kayaking, cycling, dancing, cooking, graffiti art, costume design, and filmography. 45% of the young people attending were new to Summerversity, and many had not been to a youth centre before.

Many of the courses included a formal acknowledgement of learning at the end with more than 160 accreditations awarded.

Food also played a significant role in Summerversity, 769 young people were offered a free meal as through HAF and Lunch Bunch programme as part of their course.

A total of 3411 meals were served, including 1531 hot meals prepared by young people learning to cook as part of an outdoor catering course.



Graffiti workshop at Highbury Roundhouse

“it’s been really good. I like meeting lots of new people and also knowing that I can do my best and learn new things.”

- **Young Person, Summerversity**



Kayaking at Islington Boat Club

“I learned different styles of graffiti and shadowing techniques”

- **Young Person, Summerversity**



Cooking was consistently identified as a valued life skill that young people can learn at youth centres. In the context of the cost of living crisis and an increased amount of families relying on foodbanks to eat, the skill of cooking a healthy and affordable meal is crucial for many young people. The team at **Andover Youth Club** invite young people to help them prepare meals for the rest of the group, inspiring them to develop their skills alongside developing a love of cooking food.

Andover is a specialist provision in the north of the borough where the majority of the sessions are for transition age young people ages 11-14. This dedicated space enables the team to tailor their support to the interests and needs of this group.

“The youth workers have given me responsibility of helping cook for the rest of the youth centre while creating a cook book with them, I am looking forward to finishing it and it has helped my confidence that everyone likes me cooking”

- **Young Person, Andover**



Food prepared by young people at Lift

Lift, Rosebowl, Elizabeth House, Mary’s Youth Centre, Prospex, Highbury Roundhouse, XLP, and many other youth provisions also offer opportunities to learn to cook. For young people transitioning to adulthood preparing their own food supports them towards independence, and doing so in the context of a youth space encourages them share the experience with others, expanding their social and emotional skills.

Marley’s story

Marley (14) has been attending Rosebowl since his older brother brought him along aged 6.

Attending Rosebowl has given Marley the opportunity to try rock climbing, podcasting, wrestling, bike maintenance, and cooking.

“It has helped me discover my abilities, for example I have learnt to cook and now people say I am a incredible cook.”

Marley wants to keep learning new things, during his time at Rosebowl so far he reflects that:

“My personal growth and the understanding of others has developed. I have learnt to help other people.”



[Read more from Marley](#)



FOCUS ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

Supporting young people with SEND in open access spaces provides opportunities for these young people and their peers to learn new skills, push themselves out of their comfort zones, and meet new people with shared interests.

“Angel Shed is a really fun place and you also learn how to perform in front of people and gain new skills”

- **Young Person, Angel Shed**

“it allows me to focus on, on new things and learn new skills and, and just kind of feels like a second home really”

- **Young Person, Soapbox**



Angel Shed's inclusive focus supports young people with SEND to develop not only their performing arts skills, but also their social and emotional skills.

Soapbox is another provision with a successful track record for supporting SEND young people. Soapbox's open access provision is for any young person in Islington aged 10-25. For transition age young people the team work with schools to offer a bespoke programme including mentoring, workshops and other opportunities relating to STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths).



Virtual reality at Soapbox

“I think that's a really guiding principle for us. It's not about what they can't do, it's about finding what they can do, what they love to do, what they want to do.”

- **James, Soapbox**

With activities focused around STEAM skills, and partnerships with organisations such as Mencap and ThinkForward. The Soapbox team and their specialist subject facilitators create spaces where disability is not the focus of the session, so that young people can develop skills that contribute to a career where they can thrive.

Amongst the success stories is Edward, a young person with a range of complex additional needs who joined because of their interest in music. After completing a placement they developed and delivered a year long music production course for Autistic young people. Their contribution was recognised when they won the Islington Young Volunteer of the year award, presented at a ceremony of 200 people, including their mum.

SENSE OF AGENCY AND MOTIVATION

Youth work supports young people to explore their motivations, what their aspirations are for the future, and develop their confidence and skills to make decisions that impact their lives. For young people at school transition age, attending a youth provision can offer an exciting range of opportunities to learn and build their confidence by trying new activities.

As demonstrated in the previous section, many of the skills that young people learn whilst attending youth provisions will benefit them in their adult lives, with essential skills including; team working, communication, and perseverance, all vital skills for success in education, training and employment.

Taking part in activities that cultivate young people's sense of agency and motivation from a young age can be transformational. Particularly for young people from marginalised communities who may face additional barriers in their lives.

Through interviews and discussions, young people identified trying new things and challenging themselves as a positive experience where they received support from their youth workers. Young people also highlighted taking part in the decisions made at youth provisions as a confidence boosting experience that they may not have in other settings.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

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

“because I am scared of stuff and they'd be like, “do it!” especially again, on the zip line, (the youth worker) was supporting me.”

– **Young Person, Mildmay**

“When I joined Soapbox I was really shy but now I am really confident and I can stand out and talk to people without being scared and shy, so that helps a lot.”

– **Young Person, Soapbox**



GETTING OUT OF THE CITY

Residential experiences and trips are a highlight for many young people, offering rare chances to experience completely different environments. Recently **Mildmay** with support from **Mary's Youth Club**, took a group of young people away on an overnight residential where they were encouraged to try lots of different activities including archery and a zipline. With crucial support from the youth workers, the young people increased their confidence and their motivation to try new things.

Rosebowl, in partnership with YES Outdoors took a group of young people at transition age on a residential to Wales in May 2023. The trip involved multiple new experiences for the young people as they travelled into a rural location without phone signal or internet to take part in nature based activities. A huge change to the inner city streets of Islington! Some of the young people slept outside overnight, despite their nerves there was a massive sense of accomplishment for facing their fears and sleeping in the 'wilderness'.

[Hear more about the Wales Residential](#)



By providing young people with new experiences and creating opportunities for them to reflect in a safe space, youth workers support young people to navigate transitions at every stage of their life, setting goals for themselves and supporting other young people to do the same.

Trips and residential provide opportunities for young people to exercise their curiosity about the world, by trying new things young people can face their anxieties and build their self-esteem and confidence. This is especially important for young people who are growing up after the Covid-19 pandemic. A period when their development opportunities were limited for their safety. Parents and carers can also develop their confidence as they know their young people are safe to explore the wider world with the support of youth workers.

“We only know what we are aware of, so whilst we're listening to what they want, we're also trying to kind of make them aware of the possibilities.

Paint them a new narrative, right, recognizing they are unique to themselves.

But at the same time, helping them see that there's almost, like a world of opportunities if you can make certain decisions at this point in your life.”

Clive, Rosebowl

“(I’ve) gained confidence to do things on my own”

- **Young Person, TYS**

“I’ve got to like the peak of the mountain, and I feel like I’ve achieved something in my life. I wouldn’t feel like, scared anymore since I’ve done it.”

- **Young person, Rosebowl**



“I've been using music softwares, I have actually made a few songs, even just using those like built in, voices and it has kind of led to me just thinking, wow, I've reached my goals.”

- **Young Person, Soapbox**



Anthony’s Story

Since joining Lift Anthony has made new friends, and as a result his confidence has grown.

Alongside his developing goals for the future, Anthony has also taken on responsibility as a Lift Ambassador.

“I help set up the games and social activities for youth sessions. I also help other young people especially if they are trying to get into particular fields. I can advise young people going through the same process that I have just been through to get into College or Uni. I will also be helping with outreach sessions in schools during the summer.”



Read more stories



FOCUS ON MARGINALISED GROUPS

Minority Matters supports marginalised young people including those from the Somali community, with tutoring opportunities that support their educational development. When interviewing a group of various ages from 10-16 about what they were proud of, they told us that due to the additional support they were able to focus on their academic studies, and make their parents proud. Young people attending Minority Matters also told us about how they take a role in deciding which activities and trips they will do, creating a sense of ownership over the group and developing their team working and rationalizing skills.

“They let us, discuss where we want to go and like after that they discuss together and they like, ask us where do we want to go and like, why we think that so we have a reason behind it.”

- **Young Person, Minority Matters**

Highbury Roundhouse has a long history of working with Bangladeshi, Somalian and Eritrean families. The team invite parents and carers to access the community centre and ask questions about the youth service so that they know it's a safe and appropriate place for their children.

Utilising tools such as google translate, and whatsapp video calls to communicate with family members whose English skills are developing, making adjustments such as gendered groups and prayer spaces to support religious needs, and ensuring the team are offered training on trauma informed practice, have all been crucial to building trust.

By using a holistic approach, the team continue to develop their offer, and connect young people to support within their community .



Team activity at Minority Matters

“It was about building trust inside the community. It was the most important thing.”

- **Savanah, Highbury Roundhouse**

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITIES & SUPPORT

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

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

As young people start their transition through adolescence to adulthood their connections to community and the support of others takes a greater role in their lives.

Working with the wider community, youth services are able to provide a consistent support through a young person's life. Relationships that may start whilst a young person is in primary school can set the foundations for a happy and healthy life, with many young people continuing to contact their youth workers for support as they become adults starting jobs, and starting families of their own.

“Actually, they wanna hang out with staff and they gravitate towards you and they just wanna have a conversation where they don't feel that they're being worked on.” – **Clive Rosebowl**

“I love how friendly and funny all the staff are, they make the place even more enjoyable. I'm excited for future trips and when we get more people coming in”

– **Young Person, Elthorne**

“To me I feel like Angel Shed has decreased my loneliness and I felt more encouraged to be included”

– **Young Person, Angel Shed**

Young people across different provisions identified that one of the things they value most about youth centres is the opportunity to make new connections, both with their peers and with the workers. This is both an area of impact but also a motivating factor that keeps them coming back to the youth centres.

Improving connections to others is a key area of impact and can take a range of shapes: improving existing friendships, building new friendships or developing strong, supportive relationships with their youth workers.

“I look forward to Mary’s because I get to see friends I don’t see at school”

– **Young Person, Marys**



Young people say that they have made at least one or more new friends as a result of attending the youth centres. For some young people attending the youth centre also means developing a stronger sense of community. This is evidenced through those young people that choose to contribute their free time to the youth centres and give back through volunteering or other forms of participation.

Many of the young people who contributed to this report identified opportunities to support others, whether as a friend, or in a role of responsibility such as becoming a peer mentor, volunteer or an ambassador for the youth service.

“the responsibility of becoming a volunteer for Soapbox has made me grow a lot as a young person”

– **Young Person, Soapbox**



Adel and Abdi’s Story

Adel and Abdi (names have been changed) are two brothers who arrived in the UK as refugees in 2022. Their mother began attending **Elizabeth House** to practice her English through volunteering. She later registered her sons to join the youth club. They have taken advantage of every opportunity including sport, cooking together, and a residential trip. Youth club has enabled them to make friends as they continue to adjust to living in the UK.

Older brother Adel told the team that he “loves the youth club and the youth workers. It’s like another family because now I am so far away from my relatives and all my friends back home.”

Running youth spaces in community centres such as **Elizabeth House** and **Highbury Roundhouse** provides opportunities for parents and carers to also access positive activities and connect to others in their communities. Building trust with parents and carer's as well as other members of the community supports young people as they transition to being more independent. Knowing about safe spaces they can access and safe routes they can take is particularly vital for young people as they move into secondary education. For many this is the first time they need to travel independently beyond their local area.

Working with parents, carers, and other adults such as teachers and specialist workers is key to transition age young people accessing different parts of the youth offer. Young people take the first step of walking into a youth centre because their existing connections can tell them what to expect.

"I heard about it (**Lift**) through my Mum who used to come here herself as a young person. Judith was her youth worker! So she knew it was safe."

- **Young Person, Lift**

At **Andover Youth Centre** the team use table top games to gather young people together. Sitting down together with a relaxed focus encourages the young people to socialise with people they maybe wouldn't naturally speak to. Whilst playing these games they can have open discussions about a variety of topics, such as what's going on in the local community, and how they can be a positive influence on their area.

"Being at youth makes me feel like I'm part of something bigger than myself. Together, we're working towards creating positive change in our community."

- **Young Person, Andover**

"It's been good for me and they have been around for a long time, seeing us in school, taking us to projects after school and the best part the fun activities we get to do in the holidays."

- **Young Person, TYS**



Playing ping pong at Elizabeth House

FOCUS ON GIRLS WORK

Youth workers act as role models for young people who are developing their social skills. Encouraging them to resolve conflicts with positive communication, and demonstrating how to take a proactive approach to helping their community.

“this time some of my other friends got into arguments. I helped them resolve it”

– **Young Person, Minority Matters**

On the high ropes course blindfolded,
SIS project residential



Introducing the ‘She is supported’ (SIS) Project

Developing on the success of the Islington Girls’ Supergroup, the team comprised of youth workers from **Mary’s, Prospex, and Highbury Roundhouse** teamed up with the **Brandon Centre** to enhance their offer. As well as facilitating group sessions where the girls can meet new people and try new activities, they can now access mentoring, counselling, and become ‘emotional wellbeing champions’ for their peers.

Girls who wish to access counselling will be able to do so onsite at Prospex or Highbury Roundhouse with a trained therapist from the Brandon Centre. By embedding this support into the community rather than a clinical setting, the team believe the girls will be more confident to take up the offer of support.

By working in partnership and modelling what positive relationships between women can look like, the team have seen the young women become more confident to make new friends, speak openly about the issues they face as girls, and encourage each other to succeed.

To hear more or to get involved, contact:
Sally.Baxter@marys.org.uk

“it will make the idea of therapy and counselling a lot less scary for young people because they haven't got to go somewhere that is unfamiliar.”

– **Carole, Prospex**

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.

The stories shared in this report provide a window into the impact of youth work on young people at transition age and beyond, demonstrating how valuable consistent support of youth workers is, not just for young people, but also for their families, schools and the wider communities they are a part of. We know that youth workers are not just focused on the start of the journey, but continue to support young people through adolescence until they have fully transitioned into adulthood.

Many of the youth workers who have shared their expertise in this report can attest to the power of working with young people over multiple years, and there are thriving members of the Islington community who are living examples of the life changing power of youth work.

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

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the youth workers that have contributed to this report.

By sharing stories of the impact achieved for young people, the value of providing support for specific groups and facilitating key opportunities for young people to reflect on their experiences by participating in the activities provided.

If you'd like to find out more about any of the organisations featured in this report, or more about the professional support available in the borough we have included contact details on the next page.

LEARN MORE

LEARN ABOUT THE PROVIDERS FEATURED

Andover Youth Centre

<https://manorgardenscentre.org/>

Angel Shed Theatre Company

<https://www.angelshedtheatre.org.uk/>

Collective Acting Studio

<https://collectiveactingstudio.co.uk/>

Elizabeth House

<https://elizabeth-house.org.uk/>

Elthorne Youth Club

<https://elthornepride.co.uk/>

Highbury Roundhouse

<https://www.highbury-roundhouse.org.uk/>

Lift Youth Hub

<https://www.liftislington.org.uk/>

Mary's Youth Club

<https://www.marys.org.uk/>

Mildmay Youth Club

<https://www.mildmaycommunitycentre.org/>

Minority Matters

<https://www.minoritymatters.org.uk/>

Prospex

<https://www.prospex.org.uk/>

Rosebowl

<https://www.rosebowlislington.org.uk/>

Soapbox

<https://www.soapboxislington.org.uk/>

Targeted Youth Support

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/>

XLP

<https://www.xlp.org.uk/>

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH PRACTITIONERS

Join the **Young Islington Network** or **Youth Voice** working group

Contact: sharareh.avazzadeh2@islington.gov.uk

Get involved with **QLIP**

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

Not sure where to start with working with marginalised groups?

London Youth has published an introductory guide, co-produced with practitioners from Islington.

[Download the guide here.](#)

TOGETHER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

London Youth

www.londonyouth.org

Mary's

www.marys.org.uk

Islington Play and Youth

playandyouth@islington.gov.uk

