Your guide to youth work

"I love to work with young people and empower them. My proudest moments come from having a young person come to me with a problem and being able to help them."

Judith, youth worker

What is involved?

Youth workers help young people to learn, grow, and develop through the key transition from adolescence to adulthood. They mainly work with young people aged 10 to 21. They provide interesting, educational and challenging activities to help young people improve their confidence and cope with issues that affect their lives. They support young people to work with others and to respect and value difference. They also encourage young people to take on greater responsibility for their own lives. The work involves individual counselling or support with issues such as literacy, homelessness, substance misuse or disability.

As a youth worker you could be based in a local youth club, community centre, faith centre, school or as part of a detached youth work team on the streets and local estates.

Is youth work right for me?

You need to have:

- excellent communication and listening skills;
- an understanding of the issues, concerns, and interests of young people;
- patience and resilience;
- imagination, initiative and enthusiasm in order to plan fun, educational and interesting activities for young people;
- interests or skills in areas that may interest young people, such as sports or art and
- the ability to relate to young people from various backgrounds and a commitment to equal opportunities.

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What experience/qualifications do I need?

You can start as a youth support worker, often as a part-time assistant or volunteer, without any qualifications. This is a good step into youth work as it is important to have paid or voluntary experience of working with young people when applying for professional training and jobs. As a youth support worker, you will receive basic training from your employer when you start, typically a combination of classroom based and on the job training.

In order to work as a full-time professional youth worker you will need a youth and community work qualification that is validated by the National Youth Agency (NYA). Validated qualifications can be foundation degrees, diplomas of higher education (Dip HE), degrees, or postgraduate diplomas. You can study full or part-time, by distance learning or work-based training. Entry requirements for courses vary, so it is advisable to check with the university or college that you are interested in. You may be accepted without academic qualifications if you have a substantial amount of relevant work experience and can demonstrate the potential to succeed on the course.

How much could I earn?

Youth support workers can earn between £13,000 to £16,000 per annum (or the equivalent part-time rate). Qualified youth workers can earn £18,000 to £24,000 per annum. Senior youth workers and managers can earn £27,000 to £30,000 a year or more. Local job adverts will give you a better idea of the rates of pay for these roles. See the Islington CIS jobs list for vacancies at www.islington.gov.uk/cis and follow the link for Working with Children.

What are the working hours?

Part-time hours are common for youth work positions, although there are also full-time positions available. Youth work typically involves working out-of-school hours such as evenings and weekends.

Further training and opportunities

You can work towards a work-based qualification such as a national vocational qualification (NVQ) or a vocationally related qualification (VRQ) level 2 and 3 in Youth Work. You could then go on to undertake a professional youth work qualification such as a foundation degree, a diploma of higher education, or undergraduate degree in Youth Work. With experience, you could take a postgraduate MA course in a related area like Community Development or Counselling. You could also progress to a senior or managerial role, or into specialist posts, such as working with young offenders.

Islington runs an Access to Youth Work and Playwork course, which gives a useful introduction to youth work. They also deliver a Certificate in Youth Work at level 2 as well as a Diploma in Youth Work at level 3, although these qualification courses are prioritised to those already working or volunteering in youth work settings within Islington. City and Islington College offer the NVQ in Youth Work at levels 2 and 3.

All youth workers must undergo a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check before they start working with young people. They will also need to take child protection training.

Useful contacts:

Young People's Services Development and Training
020 7527 5641
(London Borough of Islington) - ask for volunteering and training opportunities

City and Islington College
020 7700 9200
www.candi.ac.uk

Connexions
0808 001 3219
www.connexions-direct.com

Youth Work Now
www.ypnmagazine.com

The National Youth Agency
0116 242 7350
www.nya.org.uk

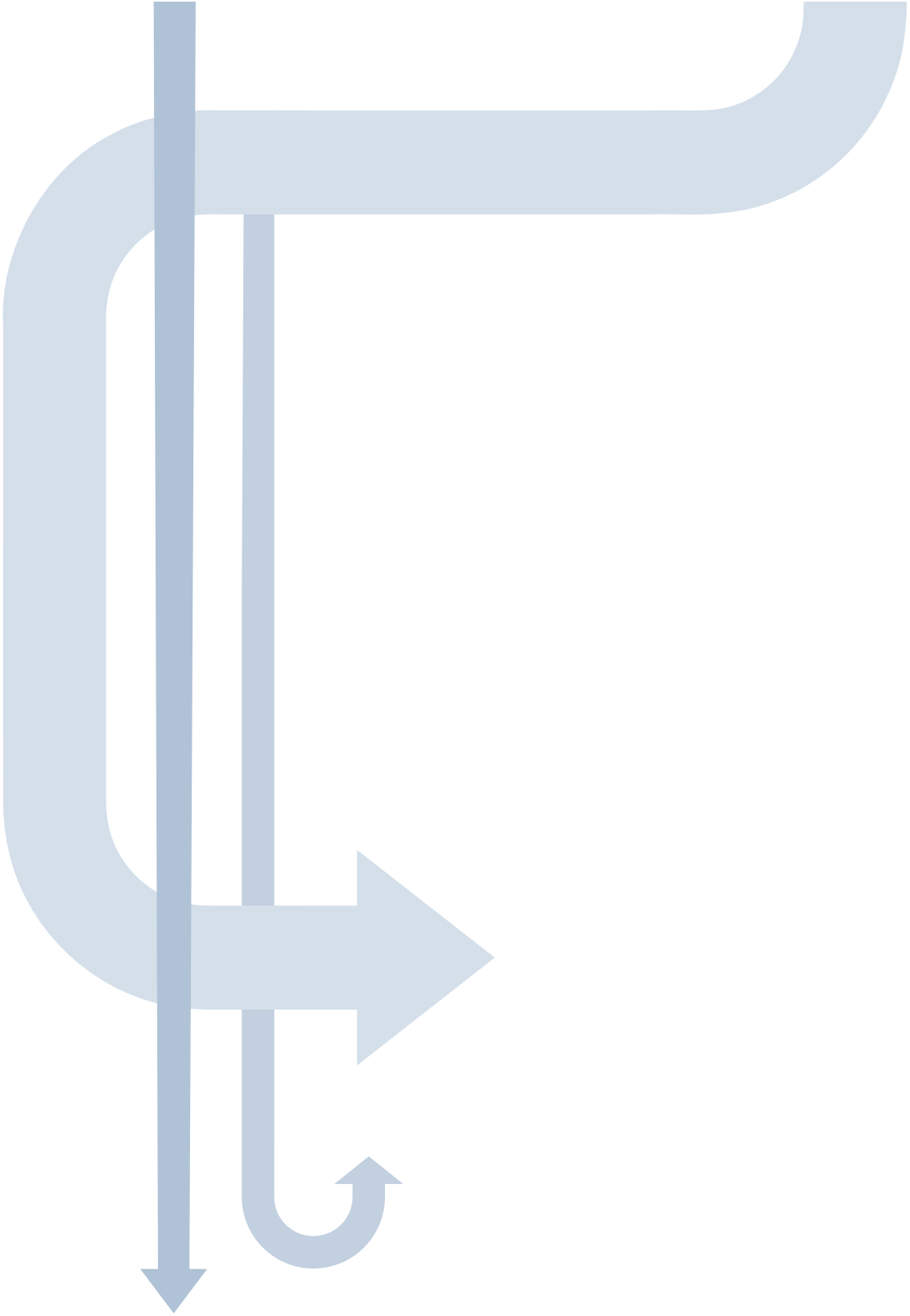
Contacts for Volunteering:

Volunteer Centre Islington
020 7686 6800
info@islingtonvolunteer.org.uk

Friends United Network
020 7485 0900
www.friendsunitednetworkuk.com

Kith & Kids (special needs)
020 8801 7432
www.kithandkids.org.uk

KEEN London (special needs)
020 7354 2431
www.keenlondon.org



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