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# Alison's year out

(3.07 min.)

*Wendy:* My name's Wendy Scott and today I'm talking to ...

*Alison:* Alison Straker.

*Wendy:* And we're going to talk about Alison's year out because I believe you did have a year out, didn't you?

*Alison:* Yes, I did.

*Wendy:* And what did you do in your year out?

*Alison:* Well, I decided I didn't really want to go straight to university, so I wrote off to lots of different organisations and I ended up working as a volunteer in a children's charity in London.

*Wendy:* And what did you actually have to do?

*Alison:* Em ... I had to do various different things. One of the main things we did was to take children away on holidays, they wouldn't otherwise get a chance to go away, or we also ran youth centres so we had a drop-in centre, and young people came to play pool and to chat and to do other things.

*Wendy:* Right ... and ... and that meant that you ... you must have lived close by or did you partly live as ... with the charity?

*Alison:* They gave me my accommodation. I lived in a ... I had a small room and we kind of shared a kitchen with about 15 other people that lived in the same building.

*Wendy:* Gosh ... and had you lived away from home before?

*Alison:* No, that was the first time I'd ever left home. It was quite daunting. I just arrived in London in this place and I didn't know what to expect or what was going to happen to me.

*Wendy:* Gosh ... were you terrified?

*Alison:* Yeah. In fact, the first day I just sat in my bedroom in tears. I didn't know what to do. And the person I was supposed to be working for wasn't there.

*Wendy:* So, what ... did you ... did you end up thinking that this had been a wonderful year or did you end up thinking ... mm ... maybe I should just have gone straight to university?

*Alison:* No, I thought it was the best thing I could possibly have done. It was certainly a very difficult year. I worked with a lot of children who had various emotional problems and a lot

of difficulties or had been abused in various ways, and it was quite difficult, but at the same time it was really rewarding, and I would never regret having done it. It was brilliant.

*Wendy:* Right. And have you used the experience since?

*Alison:* Yeah. I mean, I went back there for a few summers afterwards and worked with those kids, and I've been away and worked with other children and run exchanges and things since then, and that experience has certainly helped me as well as all the organisation and things I had to do. I learnt a lot.

*Wendy:* And how old were you when you did this?

*Alison:* I was eighteen when I left, when I started.

*Wendy:* And were you a young eighteen or an old eighteen.

*Alison:* I was an old eighteen I think, nearly nineteen.

*Wendy:* But did you feel young? I mean, were you an immature eighteen or were you an ... not an immature eighteen?

*Alison:* Not really. I mean, I'd had quite a lot of experience of going away on my own before and been travelling to various places, and I was quite independent.

*Wendy:* Right, right.

*Alison:* At the same time, when you've never left home, I still think you're a bit scared about the whole idea of being away and having to do something new.

*Wendy:* I think it's pretty brave actually. Would you recommend all school leavers these days to do a year out?

*Alison:* I really would because when I came to university I felt like I was one step ahead of everybody else because I could just enjoy arriving there and enjoy meeting new people; whereas a lot of my friends were just terrified of leaving home and I felt like I had a whole load of experience to bring to university and kind of help me to focus on my work and what I was doing in a way that I wouldn't have been able to otherwise.

*Wendy:* Sounds good. Thank you.