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We follow our Leeds Extension Team during a day of delivery and find out how our programmes have been adapted in the face of COVID-19 restrictions.

Life at university: now and then
2020 has been an unusual year to start university. What has changed? What remains the same? We asked two IntoUniversity undergraduates to talk with two IntoUniversity supporters who share the same alma mater.

Our impact over lockdown
We look at the support we provided our students and families over lockdown, and the impact it has made.

IntoUniversity in Scotland
In the spring, we will be opening our first centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Kirsty Wadsley, Head of Operations for Scotland, takes us through the challenging, but rewarding, journey of setting up new centres during the COVID era.

‘2020 has been a year of true team effort’

This year has held many difficult moments, but when I think of how IntoUniversity has risen to extraordinary challenges, I can only feel tremendous pride.

When we closed our centres in March due to lockdown and school closures, we had little idea that it would be five months before IntoUniversity could provide face-to-face support to our students again.

The full scale of the COVID-19 crisis, and the challenges it has posed for us, like many other charities, have been truly unprecedented. These challenges are put into perspective when we consider the impact the pandemic had, and continues to have, on the young people and families we work with. Lockdown school closures intensified the difficulties our students were already facing. Our staff teams were needed more than ever at the precise moment it became impossible to support students in the usual way.

IntoUniversity needed to show all the resilience and determination it encourages in young people.

Staff swiftly developed remote systems, reaching out to students by phone, online learning platform, and email, so that students could receive support, regardless of the digital provision at home. Over lockdown, centres made over 27,000 calls to over 3,300 students and their families.

Over the summer, a mammoth effort went into making sure we could reopen centres safely, adapting our programmes to cater for socially-distanced smaller classes, with a focus on helping students catch up on an estimated six-month learning loss. COVID-secure FOCUS Weeks and workshops are taking place wherever possible, as we develop more ways to deliver activities online.

As Rachel wrote in the spring edition of aspire, ‘post-lockdown, the adverse impact of COVID-19 will continue disproportionately to affect not just our students but disadvantaged students across the UK.’ In September, 48% young people from poorer homes surveyed by the Prince’s Trust felt they ‘will never succeed in life’. IntoUniversity’s work is needed now more than ever.

‘2021 will no doubt bring fresh challenges, but I am convinced we can face them together’

2020 has been a year of true team effort. Not just for staff, senior leaders, and trustees, working together for our young people. But for our supporters, who rallied behind our ‘Staying Focused’ campaign, helping us to raise over 90% of the total so far, and our university, corporate and community partners, who, like us, are determined to reach more young people where we are needed most.

Next year, IntoUniversity is opening five new centres: in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Norwich and Bradford. As many services close, we are profoundly grateful to our partners and supporters for their shared commitment in making this possible.

2021 will no doubt bring fresh challenges, but I am convinced we can face them together. The young people we support have more to contend with than ever before. IntoUniversity will work hard to support them now, and over the uncertain years ahead.
A day in the life of a (socially-distanced) centre

In September, we reopened our centres and are now seeing students face-to-face – but keeping safe has meant adapting how we work. We follow one of our teams in Leeds to find out more.

We are currently in the middle of a ‘Creative Arts’ themed FOCUS Week with Year 6 students at Bracken Edge Primary School. Bracken Edge have been a partner school since 2015. They were very keen to have us in, despite the current challenges, as they didn’t want their students to miss out.

FOCUS Weeks look a little different at the moment; most of them take place in school, and we’ve adapted activities to make them COVID-secure. The students now have individual packs, which take some preparing. We have a ‘quarantine box’ for any resources the students touch, and a cleaning box with essentials like disinfectant and gloves.

Pre-COVID, Wednesday would have been a trip day. Instead, we had artist Nadine Mahoney, an alumni of the Courtauld Gallery, lead an interactive workshop over Microsoft Teams. The children learnt about impressionist painters such as Monet, Manet and Degas, and created their own impressionist art with colours and charcoal. The students really enjoyed this hands-on activity. It was great that they could produce work to decorate the room for their graduation on Friday.

This afternoon, students learnt about the process of publishing a book, and the professions involved, from the author and illustrator, to the editor and the publisher. This brought to life the different careers within the Arts that go into making everyday items such as toys and books. The children thought of some really imaginative stories surrounding the IntoUniversity value of teamwork and practised their oracy skills when pitching their ideas to the class.

Khadija Saye Arts at IntoUniversity

The FOCUS Week on Creative Arts is one example of how we have incorporated Khadija Saye Arts at IntoUniversity into our existing programmes. The programme aims to address the lack of diversity in the UK Arts sector, encouraging young people from underrepresented backgrounds to find their path into the creative industries.
We’re back in centre to run after-school Academic Support for our Primary students. This term’s ‘degree topic’ is Engineering. Today we’re looking at Civil Engineering. Year 3 and 4 students will be learning how to compare and classify 2D shapes; Year 5 and 6 students will learn how to recognise 3D shapes.

Every student now has their own pack, with stationery, white boards, curriculum booklets and trackers. Packs are put out on students’ desks ahead of each session. They are left to quarantine for at least three days before staff can touch booklets and mark work. This session required a pack of shapes for each student, as no sharing of resources can take place in centre. They had to be ready at least three days before the session. With such a busy schedule, we have to work hard to remember that prepping needs to be done well in advance!

Students start arriving for Academic Support. Currently, we can only have 15 students in the classroom at once to ensure social distancing and with the new lockdown restrictions coming into effect tomorrow (5th November), this will decrease to 12.

In the last session, students completed a ‘shapes scavenger hunt’ to establish that shapes are used all around us in designing buildings, roads and bridges. Today, students will design their own building using their shape pack. The students have a ‘client brief’ which outlines specific features to include in their building, challenging them to recognise and compare the different properties of a shape. It should be a fun session!

‘My favourite thing about IntoUniversity is that I can learn some new things I haven’t learnt at school before, like well-being, aeronautical engineering and photography. I also enjoy seeing new teachers because I want to be a teacher when I’m older. My brother is in Year 1, and I teach him things I’ve learnt at IntoUniversity. During lockdown, the staff sent things to my dad and I worked on it at home. IntoUniversity helped me with my times tables, I only knew up to my 6s, now I know up to my 12s. IntoUniversity also called to ask how we were doing. I enjoyed the calls because we could talk about nice things, what we’ve done and our homework.’

Oumou, Year 5 Academic Support student

Getting young people back on track: a note on Learning Recovery

A key aspect of our return to face-to-face support is our focus on well-being and helping students to recover and re-engage with learning. During the first half-term of Academic Support, teams prioritised creating a safe environment in both the physical sense and in the psychological and emotional sense, using trauma-informed practices to nurture and support the young people on their return including:

- Creating a team plan to greet young people in a consistent way
- Having a consistent seating plan
- Using displays to show positive messages alongside safety messages

In order to tailor support for each individual, teams Red-Amber-Green (RAG) rated the well-being, social skills and academic needs of every Academic Support student. Guidance for this assessment was underpinned by a resilience framework developed by Daniel and Wassell, and an evidence-based oracy framework that has been developed by our oracy lead, Emily Magrath. The new Government guidance issued in November necessitated reducing Academic Support sessions from 15 to 12 students. The RAG rating, along with other information about safeguarding, helped centre staff to ensure that the most vulnerable students could still access face-to-face support.
COVID-19 has seemingly changed the university experience beyond recognition, yet according to a survey by the Unite Group, four in five students agree that although it is not how they expected their first year at university to be, they still value their time there. So what has changed? What remains the same? We asked two Into University undergraduates to talk to two Into University supporters who share the same alma mater.

Emma and Steve

Into University Hackney Downs student Emma started her Maths degree this September at the University of Southampton. Steve, Principal of Atrato Capital and Into University Trustee, was at Southampton from 1992 to 1996, studying Mechanical Engineering with German.

Q: What were your first impressions of the university?

Emma: I’m the first person in my immediate family to go to university. I think just getting here was a big motivation for me. Trying to prove to myself that I can actually do it! I never liked school that much, but I really like university. It’s easier doing one subject I actually like.

Steve: Like Emma, I was the first person in my family to go to university. I came from a small town where people went to work locally and no one ever really left, but university was this springboard to get out into the big wide world and do something different. University is much more than about just studying isn’t it? It’s about broadening your horizons, meeting new people and being a proper adult where you have to look after yourself, so all of that attracted me to university.

Q: What were your motivations for attending university?

Emma: I’m the first person in my immediate family to go to university. I think just getting here was a big motivation for me. Trying to prove to myself that I can actually do it! I never liked school that much, but I really like university. It’s easier doing one subject I actually like.

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Q: What was instrumental in helping you reach university?

E: Into University actually really was the most helpful. Obviously my parents didn’t go to university and they always wanted me to go, but they weren’t a big factor in saying ‘oh you should go’. I never wanted to go until my GCSEs. I started going to Into University a lot more and then they were telling me about their experiences at university and that made me want to go. It just appealed a lot more to me then.

S: I remember there being a couple of really good teachers, my Maths teacher was one of them, who kind of pushed me and drove me and taught me that I ought to be thinking about it. I think I had parental support to do it as well, but a bit like Emma, my parents hadn’t been to university so they didn’t really know anymore on that.

‘University is much more than about just studying isn’t it? It’s about broadening your horizons, meeting new people and being a proper adult.’
Alex and Catherine

**Intu**University Nottingham West student Alex moved to Leicester in September, beginning his Pharmacy degree at De Montfort University. Catherine is the Head of the St. James's Place Charitable Foundation, a key supporter of Intu University Weston-super-Mare, and studied Business Studies and Marketing at De Montfort between 1984-1988.

**Q: What was most instrumental in helping you get to university?**

**Alex:** It was really the impact that Intu University has had on my life. There are just so many things that I wouldn’t have known about, or wouldn’t have been able to experience, without Intu University. The Mentoring scheme: having someone who has been through, or is going through, university. Having them encourage you and share their knowledge about the experience. My corporate mentor: I’m so grateful for him. He’s helped me through so much. In Year 1, I really needed guidance on the things I wanted to do. My mentor really helped me find out all the things I was meant to be doing. It was just really great.

**Catherine:** Initially, I was in two minds about going to university as I also had an offer to go on a Management Training programme with Mothercare! I also didn’t get my first choice at university as I didn’t get the right grades, so I went through clearing and was offered a place at DeMontfort (which at the time was actually called Leicester Polytechnic). In the end, it was my brothers who encouraged me to go because they felt it would be good for me to have that independence and stand on my own two feet. Looking back I think that’s what I would take from university, you build an independence and an understanding of the world but in a protected environment. It’s kind of the stepping stone to becoming an independent adult.

‘That’s one of the things about university that I really like. You can meet a lot of people who have the same mindset and you can support each other.’

**Q: What’s been the most fulfilling aspect of university?**

**A:** Being in an environment where everyone is working towards the same goals. We all want to graduate university and become a Pharmacist. You’re surrounded by people who you can relate to and they can relate to you. That’s one of the things about university that I really like. You can meet a lot of people who have the same mindset and you can support each other.

**C:** The people I met - I met three of my closest friends today in my first week at university! We were on the same corridor in the halls of residence! So yes, one of the best things for me was the people I met and who have continued to be a part of my life. The experience of living away from home, gaining your independence but in that safe environment was also a key part for me. University opens up your horizons. There is a whole wide world out there and I think going to university opened that up for me and I’ve done things I probably wouldn’t have done had I not gone to university.

**Q: What’s the most challenging aspect of your time at university?**

**A:** Losing a lot of contact hours. I’ve always been used to having my teacher right in front of me and being able to contact them face-to-face. You are given the opportunity to ask questions, but being present in the lecture theatre would be much easier. It’s also much easier to get distracted at home.

**C:** You need to be disciplined and self-motivated, there are a lot of distractions presented to you as a student and that’s possibly a bigger challenge for today’s students too. When I went to university there was a lot more scheduled lecture time than there appears today so overall remaining focused on doing your studies is key.

**Q: Alex, is there anything that worries you about life after university?**

**A:** Probably adapting to not having as much support as you get in education than in actual real life. But I feel like university helps you gain a lot of independence anyway!

**Q: Catherine, is there any advice you have for Alex?**

**C:** Enjoy it! Make the most of it because it is one of those times that you may never get again and you can experience new things that you wouldn’t have necessarily done before. I also think from a future employment perspective, make connections now with potential employers and get work experience. Networking and building your CV will stand you in good stead for when you’re looking to secure employment post your degree.
Our impact during lockdown

When we closed our centres in March, it was crucial that our teams were immediately able to offer bespoke remote support to our Academic Support students. Having built up strong relationships with these students over many years, staff not only have a good understanding of their academic ability, but also their situation at home. This allowed teams to offer individual support to these students during the school closure period.

What support did students need?

We identified six key areas where students needed our support:

- **Pastoral support**
  Three times more safeguarding cases were reported by IntoUniversity staff during the Easter Holidays than last year.

- **Regular contact with trained educators**
  Low-income students were half as likely to be in regular communication with their teacher.

- **Feedback on work completed at home**
  60% of IntoUniversity centres said less than half of Primary students were receiving feedback on their work from their teachers.

- **Employment support**
  61% of employers cancelled some or all placements.

- **Educational work to do at home**
  57% of IntoUniversity centres said at least half of their Primary students weren’t being set enough work by their schools.

- **University admissions advice**
  There was an 85% increase (compared to last year) in the proportion of students who requested follow-up support from IntoUniversity on results day.

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** IntoUniversity survey of Centre Leaders, May 2020.
How did we tackle these needs?

Over 900 students taking part via our online platform

- Remote Academic Support Curriculum
- Telephone tutorials to support with work set by students’ schools
- Video content to introduce each session, explain the content and work through examples, was created by staff across the network to aid understanding and to allow students to see a familiar face
- Pastoral support to students and their families
- Signposting to other organisations such as food banks and financial support
- Weekly newsletters, emails and updates were created to keep students, families and staff updated
- Newsletters with free career advice, study skills, resources to support with metacognition and study skills and prizes on offer
- Weekly newsletters, emails and updates were created to keep students, families and staff updated

351 students had 1,700 meetings with their mentors

- Existing relationships moved online, allowing students to continue to receive 1-1-1 academic and pastoral support from a mentor
- Email communication and video calls facilitated by IntOUniversity staff
- Newsletters with resources to support and facilitate effective mentoring meetings

Over 2,000 students supported through phone 1:1s

- Careers and university applications
- CV and application writing workshops
- Online internship opportunities
- Webinars on a variety of industries
- Pastoral support to students and their families
- Signposting to other organisations such as food banks and financial support
- Newsletters with free career advice, study skills, resources to support with metacognition and study skills and prizes on offer
- Weekly newsletters, emails and updates were created to keep students, families and staff updated

497 students received careers support

- Careers Support
- University Applications
- Careers  Support
- University Applications
- Careers Support
- University Applications

27,000 phone conversations with over 3,500 students

- Academic Support Calls
- Telephone tutorials to support with work set by students’ schools
- Video content to introduce each session, explain the content and work through examples, was created by staff across the network to aid understanding and to allow students to see a familiar face
- Pastoral support to students and their families
- Signposting to other organisations such as food banks and financial support
- Weekly newsletters, emails and updates were created to keep students, families and staff updated

What was the impact of our support?

As a result of this support during lockdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working independently</th>
<th>Positive about school return</th>
<th>E-mentoring success</th>
<th>For more information about our impact during lockdown, visit the impact page of our website to read our Lockdown Impact Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of students felt more confident about working independently</td>
<td>of students felt more positive about returning to school</td>
<td>of students felt e-mentoring helped them with their school work during lockdown</td>
<td>of students felt e-mentoring helped keep them motivated during lockdown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘It is so useful being able to see how you go through the work with him. It gives him so much confidence to go through it independently at the end of the call, and gives me more confidence to be able to help him, even with subjects I’ve never studied before.’

Parent of an IntOUniversity Kennington student

‘IntoUniversity has shown that they care for and support me because they have called me every week since schools have closed. They actually take their time to call us and check up on us and I’m really grateful and appreciate it.’

IntoUniversity Leeds East student

‘I like that the IntoUniversity team gives excellent feedback. The feedback is constructive and follows a format which first identifies what was good and then challenges me to do better.’

IntoUniversity Southampton West student

I think that the discussion-based learning on Seesaw is good, and I really enjoyed talking things through with Jumana and Ahmed. I think that teaching should be more like this, as it allows children to voice their opinions. I’m so glad they now have this type of work to be getting on with!’

Parent of an IntOUniversity Brixton student
IntoUniversity in Scotland

In Spring 2021, we will open our first two centres in Scotland: Govan in Glasgow and Craigmillar in Edinburgh. A third centre in Maryhill, Glasgow has been delayed by a few months due to the impact of COVID and will instead open in the Autumn. With so much of the project having had to be delivered remotely, we are especially delighted to be opening soon.

University partnerships

The project is a collaboration between IntoUniversity and the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. It comes to fruition on the back of a comprehensive feasibility study that - through consultation with existing providers and other national and local key stakeholders - identified the potential for IntoUniversity to operate in Scotland and which geographical areas the centres could serve most meaningfully.

The partnership has involved collaboration on fundraising and operations. Both have proved successful in achieving the funding to set-up all three centres, and provided crucial local insights and introductions to key stakeholders, especially whilst unable to meet in person.

Mapping of schools’ data was undertaken and shared with local authorities and the university partners. The mapping enabled the shortlisting of potential sites using web-based information and local knowledge shared with us in online conversations. We were fortunate to be able to visit potential sites when restrictions eased briefly.

Community relationships

Our establishment in Scotland is also supported via partnerships with schools, colleges, local authorities and other third sector organisations.

Accenture, a key supporter of IntoUniversity’s expansion in Scotland, generously provided pro bono support for three months during the Summer, including the creation of a suite of training materials for IntoUniversity staff, focused on the Scottish education system and progression routes through Further and Higher Education in Scotland, including local labour market information and trends.

“Supporting diverse talent from all walks of life to access careers is central to Accenture’s community investment strategy, Skills to Succeed, and key to the success of our own recruitment practises. We are pleased to partner with IntoUniversity to inspire and support young people in Scotland to prepare for the world of work, further education and training.”

Camilla Drejer, Head of Corporate Citizenship in the UKI, Accenture

The end of 2020 sees us appointing staff to the centre roles in Govan and Craigmillar, progressing with our preferred sites in both areas, and starting to create our programme resources ready for young people next year. The start of 2021 will be exciting and very busy as we train our new staff, finalise our programme resources, and prepare our centre spaces to welcome young people.

‘For Glasgow, the partnership with IntoUniversity and the University of Edinburgh brings a welcome new element and approach to the widening participation work we already undertake. With the centres opening in the coming months, it is an exciting time and although we have all worked hard to get to this point, we understand that we are embarking on an equally busy phase of integrating the centres into their communities for the benefit of young learners and their families.

We look forward to the challenge and are reassured that the strong partnership we have developed with IntoUniversity and the University of Edinburgh places us well to meet our joint aims and objectives and most importantly, to benefit the up-and-coming young people in these areas.’

Neil Croll, Head of Widening Participation, The University of Glasgow

IntoUniversity’s programme

The centres will deliver IntoUniversity’s programme with adaptations to meet priorities within Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). We will ensure content is representative of Scotland and its people - past, present, and future.

We have been supported by academic staff and graduate education students at the University of Edinburgh who have been: reviewing our structural work; providing recommendations for context adaptations; sharing expertise in Additional Support for Learning; and mapping the Academic Support curriculum to the CfE.

We’re thrilled to see this project take off in Edinburgh and Glasgow. IntoUniversity brings a fantastic place-based model of community outreach that complements really well the existing widening access and community outreach that exists across the city. It will give us a chance to build a long-term and meaningful relationship with the families and their young people in Craigmillar – to build on existing links and to grow new ones. For us this coordinated approach across the two universities and IntoUniversity is also a key way we are implementing the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access in Scotland.’

Laura Cattell, Head of Widening Participation and Deputy Director Student Recruitment and Admissions, The University of Edinburgh

We would love to hear your feedback about aspire.
To get in touch or to find out more about IntoUniversity please visit our website www.intouniversity.org, drop Vicky an email at aspire@intouniversity.org or call us on 020 7243 0242

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