Sophie Count, Fundraising Officer at IntoUniversity Head Office, took the opportunity this term to catch up with Pooja Kawa, a student who took part in programmes run by IntoUniversity Hammersmith and who was subsequently invited to apply for a work experience placement at Buckingham Palace. Pooja is currently in her second year at the University of Bristol reading History, and has just finished her spring term exams.

With her exams behind her, I had the pleasure of speaking to an extremely friendly and enthusiastic Pooja over the phone. We began our conversation with a discussion about her experience and time with IntoUniversity. She recalled that she first heard about the programmes whilst she was in her AS year at William Morris Sixth Form. Through IntoUniversity Hammersmith and the corporate mentoring scheme, she was paired with corporate mentor Vicky who was able to offer her support and guidance, as well as practical advice, on her journey to university. From a pastoral point of view, Pooja recalled that having someone who had already gone to university and had already got an amazing job was an invaluable resource. This was especially true after she received her offer from the University of Bristol and began her plans for living away from home.

When asked for her opinion on the key benefits of IntoUniversity’s work, she replied enthusiastically. For her, the value lies in levelling the playing field for all young people, a topic that she is clearly passionate about.

She strongly believes that the programmes IntoUniversity provides ‘just give kids a lot more confidence’. She is also keenly aware of the impact such work can have on the parents of children involved, providing peace of mind that their children are receiving adequate support in order to fulfil their potential.

A stand-out experience for Pooja during her time with IntoUniversity Hammersmith was her work experience placement at Buckingham Palace, based in the Private Secretary’s Office. Pooja revealed that in the run up to the interview for this position she was able to receive interview practice and advice from Jess, one of our staff team in the Hammersmith centre. So in this sense she was not ‘going in blind.’ After this support, she was able to enjoy the interview experience rather than panicking beforehand, and the success of her interview was no doubt partly down to this new-found confidence.

Being a keen history-lover, this work experience provided the opportunity to further her knowledge and explore some potential careers within her field. Pooja spoke passionately about her time at the Palace and the support she received in the month that she spent there. She commented that everybody she came in to contact with throughout her placement made a real effort to find out what she wanted to do and the skills that she wanted to improve upon.

She gained administrative experience in a variety of departments and, with the staff aware that she had a particular aptitude for history, she was offered the opportunity to visit Windsor Castle and explore its fascinating archives; these include documents which provide detailed insights into the history of the British Monarchy.

Laughing, Pooja admitted that prior to the work experience opportunity, she would have had no idea how many departments there were within Buckingham Palace. But principally, she says, the placement opened her eyes to the choices available to her after she finishes university and embarks on her career. Although she would be too modest to say so, Pooja excelled in this placement and those who worked with her said that they were delighted to have her as part of the team.

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So what does the future hold? Well, aside from her busy work schedule at university and involvement in numerous hobbies, Pooja has also found the time to register and start her training as a volunteer at the IntoUniversity Bristol East centre. Here she will take part in the university student mentoring scheme, supporting another young person on his or her own educational journey. I have no doubt that Pooja will make a brilliant and committed mentor, and we wish her all the best for her studies and her future career.
A grandmother’s love, determination and vision

There are two reasons why I’m committed to Widening Participation. The first is personal, and the personal is deeply rooted. My grandmother, along with my three younger brothers, brought me up. Like many in my class, leaving school at sixteen and getting a job looked inevitable. My three brothers all did this. If I were in any way different it was that I liked reading and I was always curious. When I was eight or so my grandmother walked me into Manchester by a circuitous route, through Salford University. I was impressed by the buildings and the students hurrying this way and that with books in their hands. My grandmother told me that if I worked hard at school I might one day go there. As a young girl brought up in the north-west, she had been picked out at school as very clever and offered a scholarship to stay on. But her parents needed her to go to work and help support the family. So she left school at fourteen. When there were no suitable jobs to be had for me at sixteen then that conversation, and my grandmother’s conviction that education was the most valuable commodity to be had, came back to me. I returned to school and entered the sixth form, setting my sights on gaining a place at university.

The second reason for my commitment to widening participation is more political. I still recall my classmates and the kids on the estate who I played with where I grew up. Children are savvy about each other’s abilities or lack of them. Among my friends, very few of whom stayed on at school, there were leaders and managers, those with dazzling abilities to memorize, analyze and plan, problem-solvers and creative innovators. I often wonder what happened to them.

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Those of us committed to Widening Participation are like talent scouts – we just want to find and nurture it.

I wasn’t alone among those with intellectual abilities. But I had a grandmother’s love, determination and vision. And later I had teachers who saw potential, worked with me and eventually encouraged me to try for Cambridge University. So now when I visit comprehensive schools and sixth forms to talk to them about university I know there are many who just need their aspirations and expectations expanded. The ability is there; I remember seeing it and admiring it in several kids my own age. Those of us committed to Widening Participation are like talent scouts – we just want to find and nurture it. Politically, we want to extend the opportunities that were, for one reason or another, extended to us.

HRH The Duke of York visits IntoUniversity Bristol East

This February, we had the pleasure of welcoming HRH The Duke of York to our Bristol East centre.

The Duke joined a class of pupils from St Nicholas of Tolentine Primary School as they explored sustainability and environmental issues. His Royal Highness said how delighted he was to see volunteers from the University of Bristol supporting young people in the local community and emphasised the importance of aspirational role models.

The Duke discusses sustainability with students from St Nicholas of Tolentine Primary School. His Royal Highness meets with young people and volunteers at IntoUniversity Bristol East.
**Insight**

Impact, updates and highlights from the network

**IntoUniversity Bristol update**

**A Successful Partnership**

There were many reasons the University of Bristol was keen to work with IntoUniversity. Having seen the excellent work delivered by IntoUniversity and the impact of their work in other areas of the country, we firmly believed that they could make a real difference to Bristol’s young people. Investing in the Bristol East centre was an exciting way for the University to deliver on our commitment to education in the city, provide high quality Academic Support and working alongside the IntoUniversity team to help young people fulfil their potential.

The Bristol East centre opened its doors to local students in January 2013 with the official launch taking place on 29th April 2013. The IntoUniversity team were based at the University of Bristol from September to December 2012 while their new premises were being prepared. This gave them an opportunity to develop relationships with schools in the local area in preparation for the opening of the centre. It was fantastic for us to have the team on site when they first arrived in Bristol so that the University’s Widening Participation team and the IntoUniversity team could get to know each other, share information and ideas about their work while we eagerly awaited the opening of the centre.

Following the launch of the centre we have continued to work closely with the IntoUniversity team, meeting regularly to talk about our work with schools, explore how our programmes complement each other and find innovative ways to improve the help that we offer schools and young people.

Staff from the University have visited the centre to see the activities they do, helped out with Academic Support and have been thrilled to welcome so many of Bristol’s young people to the University. We have worked closely with IntoUniversity to make sure that young people attending their centres have the best possible chance of taking part in other activities at the University such as summer schools, academic programmes and Realising Opportunities. This close relationship helps young people to get the most from the educational opportunities available to them in school, at the IntoUniversity centre and the University.

**Our Impact So Far**

Almost a year after the Bristol East centre first opened its doors we are delighted with its success. Within a few weeks of opening, the centre had filled all the places on its Academic Support programme and the annual report shows that the centre met, and often exceeded, its targets in almost all areas of activity. 81% of the first cohort of Bristol school leavers attained a university place, a fantastic result achieved in a short space of time. We were extremely pleased to welcome 12 IntoUniversity students (2 from Bristol and 10 from London) who successfully enrolled as students at the University of Bristol in September and hope to welcome many more in future years.

We look forward to a long and successful relationship with IntoUniversity, helping Bristol’s young people to achieve bright futures.

**IntoUniversity students’ degree subjects compared to all students nationally**

![Graph showing degree subjects comparison]

For the first time we have compared the subjects studied by our students with the national data. This graph shows the subjects that our Year 13 school leavers chose to study at university by comparison with the subjects chosen by Year 13 school leavers nationally.

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**Lucy Collins**

Lucy graduated from the University of Bristol with a BSc in Sociology in 2000. In 2006 she was appointed as Head of Widening Participation and Undergraduate Recruitment.

**Zoe Pither**

Zoe is the Widening Participation Student Support Manager at the University of Bristol. She has worked in Higher Education for 15 years.

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**A conversation with a mentoring pair**

Connor and Kelvin have been a mentoring pair for three years at our IntoUniversity Hackney South centre.

**Please tell me a little bit about yourselves.**

Connor: I am a third year student at LSE studying Maths and Economics.

Kelvin: I am in Year 8 at Haggerston School. My favourite subjects are maths and PE.

**How long have you been involved with IntoUniversity for?**

Kelvin: I have been coming to IntoUniversity since I was in Year 5, so four years. I first started coming to Academic Support sessions to get help with homework, and I have also had a mentor for three years.

Connor: I began volunteering in my first year at LSE, so this is my third year of being a mentor at Hackney South. I now also volunteer as an Academic Support tutor.

**Connor – how would you describe your experience of volunteering for IntoUniversity?**

Why did you decide to become a mentor?

Connor: I found out about IntoUniversity through the LSE volunteering service. It’s the sort of thing that I would have benefitted from when I was younger so I jumped at the chance of getting involved.

How do you and Kelvin use your one-to-one mentoring sessions?

Connor: We meet for an hour and a half every other week. In Year 1, we focused on numeracy, and how this relates to other topics and the real world. In Year 2 we did lots of reading – we especially enjoyed discovering Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials trilogy. Kelvin was also very nervous about the transition to secondary school so we practised talking to new people by cooking pizza and offering it around.

Kelvin: This year, we have been doing lots of art – we are currently working on a drawing of Barack Obama. We also enjoy playing games such as chess (we made our own chess board).

**What have you enjoyed most about mentoring?**

Kelvin: My favourite parts have been the trip to look around Goldsmiths, doing maths and art and having fun. The biggest challenge has been creating an elaborate, zoot-themed hat as part of a competition.

Connor: I have found the programme to be very structured, and it’s great that I can see the impact I am making first-hand.

Connor – what have you learnt from the experience?

Connor: I have learnt a lot about planning and organisation, as I have to plan our sessions together, work out any resources we need, and fit it around my university work. I have also enjoyed meeting new people at IntoUniversity and learning about the local community.

**Have you noticed any wider impact of your mentoring experience in other parts of your lives/study?**

Kelvin: I am a lot more confident now, especially around adults.

Connor: At university you are in danger of living in a bubble. Being involved with IntoUniversity helps me feel like I am part of the wider London community.

Connor – what would you say to someone who was thinking about becoming a mentor with IntoUniversity?

There are lots of advantages to volunteering with IntoUniversity – there are different opportunities available to suit every person. Having been lucky enough to reach university myself, it’s a privilege to be able to help give young people the best chance possible.
Spotlight

‘At the most fundamental level… human happiness is determined… by our relationship with and the contribution we understand we make to the lives of others.

Please can you tell us about your educational background and early career? A degree in Modern History at Oxford followed a public school education. I entered Investment Banking and a two year Graduate Training programme straight from university. Fortunately I could recall some of my maths A level.

What was it that appealed to you about a Corporate Responsibility role within UBS? After 12 years on the trading floor, for the majority of time as a fixed income derivatives trader, I moved by choice to a Corporate Responsibility role, driven by belief in the importance, relevance, power and inherent philosophical challenge of such a position.

How would you describe the community affairs strategy at UBS? Designed to make an impact, a key component of an holistic and wider Corporate Responsibility programme. Constructed around who and what we are, as a firm, and focused thematically and geographically so as to be relevant to society and our employees. In the UK our focus on Education and Entrepreneurship concentrates on Hackney where long-term partnerships with demonstrable outcomes enable us to deploy the full range of relevant UBS resources.

How have you seen IntoUniversity develop since 2007, when you first began funding us? IntoUniversity has simultaneously managed to expand at an extra-ordinary pace whilst staying true to its values and, if anything, increasing the quality and impact of its work. This is a remarkable achievement and testament to the quality of leadership, along with investment into infrastructure and the less visible and glamorous side of an organisation.

What has been the highlight for you of this long-term partnership between UBS and IntoUniversity? I strongly believe in the power and importance of education, not just as an engine of social mobility and opportunity but as the catalyst and pre-requisite for the advancement of civilisation itself and therefore of human fulfilment (excuse the grandiloquence). As a result whilst there are many highlights, time and time again, it is meeting individuals – seeing or hearing of lives transformed, of journeys made that quite simply would not have occurred without the work and dedication of IntoUniversity that never ceases to inspire me. At an institutional and individual level UBS and its staff are deeply and without hesitation or a hint of self-consciousness, proud to be a part of what brings this about. Given that equality of opportunity or social mobility facilitated by education seems to have declined in the UK over the time of my working career, the relevance of this work is greater than ever.

Setting up and running an Academy is a major undertaking, can you tell us how UBS became involved with the Bridge Academy in Hackney? Our work had long involved us in the Hackney community and the world of education. When we became aware of the Academy programme in detail – in 2001/02 – including via a proposal to help establish an Academy in Hackney as part of a consortium, we quickly realised that it offered the opportunity to accelerate towards many of the objectives of our programme and be part of a step change within Hackney, albeit at a new level of ambition and commensurate complexity. As other members of the consortium dropped out, we reflected long and hard about taking this forward on our own. The subsequent years have borne out, I think the validity of our decision: even if the project and programme itself proved even more complex and challenging than we had envisaged, the results, by all measures, have more than justified the decision.

Over the length of the partnership with UBS, IntoUniversity has benefitted from the input of many UBS volunteers over a variety of our programmes. Why is volunteering so important to the UBS corporate identity? The cliché is true: our staff are our greatest asset. UBS believes in the importance of volunteering institutionally – we know those who volunteer tend to outperform those who don’t. Furthermore it builds culture – it broadens horizons; develops individuals and teams. Employees believe in the worth, importance and efficacy of volunteering. Staff tell us, repeatedly and at all junctures of their careers, how much they value the encouragement, opportunity and time provided to volunteer.

IntoUniversity and others demonstrate just how effective a resource it can be. Indeed we have found what I believe to be mutual benefit in working with IntoUniversity to craft and create new standards and platforms for volunteering.

What do you think that your staff members gain in the way of personal development from their volunteering experiences? There is a growing body of academic and empirical evidence to support the view that in a considerable variety of ways staff can benefit, both personally and professionally, from carefully constructed volunteering programmes. At the most fundamental level it appears that human happiness is determined, perhaps unsurprisingly, by our relationship with and the contribution we understand we make to the lives of others. Volunteering, especially when professionally managed, provides a space where such interaction can not only take place, but in areas of great need and with demonstrable outcome.

Nick Wright is Managing Director, Corporate Responsibility and Community Affairs at UBS in EMEA. Nick is a long-standing supporter of IntoUniversity and attended our 10th Anniversary Gala in 2012. UBS itself has been a key corporate partner for IntoUniversity since 2007 and in that time we have benefitted from a great many dedicated and focused UBS volunteers. Here Nick speaks about the role and impact of Corporate Responsibility, social mobility and the value of employee volunteering.