

Melksham Oak Community School and First Intuition, 2022

Bristol is a city of huge disparity in terms of education outcomes. In South Bristol Higher Education participation is only 22.3%, including 3 of the 5 lowest performing neighbourhoods in England: Hartcliffe (8.7%, lowest in England), Withywood and Highridge (Bristol Key Facts 2022).

However, there are a huge amount of career focused opportunities for schools to access, with many businesses in Bristol able to engage with their local community. This is in contrast to more rural areas and small towns where education outcomes can be similarly unequal, but access to career focused opportunities for their students are much more limited.

During the pandemic the Career Mentoring in person programme had to be flexed to accommodate online learning in order to keep going and redeveloped to be delivered entirely online. One of the first schools to accommodate this was Melksham Oak Community School, based in a small town in Wiltshire, who were matched with a central Bristol business, First Intuition - a partnership that would not have happened pre-pandemic.



The impact of this online partnership was so successful that the partnership is still continuing for the third year in a row, having now developed into a hybrid version where First Intuition employees travel to the school to deliver a number of the sessions in person, despite the distance and resulting time out of their day jobs.



“Bringing together a city based company, First Intuition, and a rural school, Melksham Oak Community School, helped to break cultural and social barriers, on all sides. Working with the mentors gave the students a chance to see life from a different point of view, to hear different stories and develop their own aspirations as a result.” Andrew Creed, Higher Education Advisor, WIN

As Christina Ransom at First Intuition explained, the impact on the Year 9 students at this more rural school was so apparent, and the unique experience and rewards for the volunteers involved so high, that deciding to partner with a more local Bristol city based school to make their commitment easier just didn't feel right. The next programme is taking place this summer, and this time the students will also have an opportunity to visit First Intuition's Bristol office, a world away from Melksham.

“I used to see school as a barrier and I now see it as a gateway” Student, Melksham Oak CS