Spotlight: KCL Pakistani Society (KCL Paksoc)

by Zain Hameed, President

Tell us about the outreach event or programme your society runs?

We held a terrific workshop educating sixth formers on how to provide basic life support and CPR. Using medical mannequins, we demonstrated the lifesaving technique, whilst also supplying worksheets to take away. At the end we held a Q&A, discussing university life, healthcare degrees and how to create strong UCAS applications. All 40 students, the society volunteers and KCLSU staff thoroughly enjoyed the event, proving to be both educational and very fun!

Why did your activity group or sports club get involved with Widening Participation?

Being a well-established society with a vast pool of students, each possessing unique abilities, it's crucial that we put such skills to a beneficial use. It's also vital we encourage others, including students not normally associated with Paksoc, to get involved.

By publicising our events on social media, we hope to inspire as many students as possible from different backgrounds/ universities, to perform outreach. We intend to not only boost the CV's of volunteers, but instil a sense of confidence, achievement and peace of mind, gained through the satisfaction of helping to make immeasurable differences in other people's lives.

What advice would you give to an activity group or sports club that’s interested in WP outreach but isn’t sure what they’d like to do?

Outreach can be anything you wish. There is an endless amount of opportunities available to support communities both here and abroad. All you need to do is:

- Identify the particular problem you wish to address.
- Form a team with specific roles for each volunteer.
- Plan your approach. E.g. it could be running educational presentations for primary school students about healthy eating.
- Next contact a local school, pitch your idea and see if they would be happy for you and your team to run this event and make sure to set up a date.
- Finally attend, enjoy, take plenty of pictures and help inspire others by helping others!

Furthermore, the KCLSU WP department and fellow student societies are always looking for volunteers for some great initiatives, so feel free to contact either for a potential joint event. It couldn't be more straightforward and rewarding.

Outreach can also be done online. For example, we created a Just Giving page to fund the building of water pumps in Pakistan during the recent heat wave.

What WP outreach does you activity group or sports club have planned for this year?

This semester, we hope to undertake a variety of outreach in conjunction with other university societies and local causes. This includes working with the KCL Disability Awareness Society (DAS) to educate pupils in local schools about disability, and how universities such as KCL ensure access to education for all. We are
also organizing external speakers for our discussion panel with KCL Intersectional Feminist Society and the 'It Stops Here' campaign, examining the subjugation of women in South Asia.

Furthermore, for our flagship charity dinner and fashion show 'Mehfil', we'll be supporting the Depilex Smile Again Foundation. This tremendous cause provides reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation for women subjected to acid attacks in South Asia, including giving psychological and vocational support to ease their integration back into society. With over 450 students attending the event, we hope to raise both awareness and funds for this life changing foundation.

**What skills do you think you've gained from being involved in WP outreach?**

From our educational events, we've learnt how to effectively communicate and teach pupils of various ages and backgrounds.

Through charity events requiring us to recruit volunteers and generate online donations, we’ve utilized the power of advertising and social media to support global causes.

With each outreach event different committee members are assigned the managerial roles, helping to provide them with leadership experience and invaluable skills useful far beyond university life.

**What has been your proudest WP moment?**

From March to September of the past year, we have successfully run and been involved with 8 outreach events, helping to benefit citizens both in the UK and abroad. These included:

- Promoting oral hygiene and healthy eating at a primary school in Tower Hamlets
- Health Checks at the Southall Mela with the KCL Bangladeshi and Afghan Welfare Societies
- The national supermarket collection in conjunction with Tesco and The Trussell Trust
- Funding the building of a water pump in a Pakistani school during the devastating heat wave
- Providing toys for orphaned children in Lahore Pakistan, during Eid celebrations
- The K+ Spotlight event with the WP department teaching CPR to sixth formers
- Feeding the homeless at a shelter in Central London
- Running a medical/dental university entrance exam workshop at Teach First headquarters

These events set a great precedent for term and enabled us to become involved with phenomenal Pakistani based organisations such as the Depilex Smile Again Foundation and CARE Pakistan (CARE provides free education to over 180,000 children across deprived regions of country). Via our student network, we've helped to provide them with the awareness and support that they rightly deserve in the UK.

Our most recent scheme in December, supplying clothes both for women living in refugee housing to escape domestic abuse, and those displaced by natural disasters, we received an incredible 30 bags of clothes (some brand new) in just 4 days. Consequently, we were also able to send clothes to Syrian refugees in Calais, as well as the homeless citizens of London via the KCL Islamic Society's winter clothes drive.

In essence, I've had not one but many proud WP moments. They involve repeatedly bearing witness to the incredible warmth and generosity of fellow students and citizens, sparing not just money but their valuable time and energy to support outreach. It is overwhelming, and reinforces the simple fact that people don't need a reason to help others. All they need is the opportunity, and these opportunities are what KCL Paksoc has tried to provide as much as possible this year, for everyone.