

CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CASE STUDIES

ELLIE'S STORY:

DISCOVERING CONFIDENCE, CURIOSITY
AND A LOVE OF LEARNING THROUGH
ENRICHMENT





Ellie's Story

Children's University (CU) enables children to access high-quality enrichment, building the confidence, curiosity and skills that underpin lifelong success. For Ellie, that journey began at seven and went on to shape her confidence, her approach to learning, and her future career. Reflecting on her time with Kent Children's University (KCU), Ellie highlights not just the activities, but the sense of growth, new experiences and increasing self-belief.

"I was always quite shy," she explains. ***"I liked school, but I didn't like going somewhere new if I didn't know anyone. KCU helped me change that."***

Today, Ellie works as a Digital Content Designer in local government, creating accessible online services. Her journey began with a visit from KCU at primary school.

Introduction to KCU

Ellie was introduced to KCU at school, with an early visit to The Hop Farm marking the start of her engagement.

"It was optional," she recalls. ***"But that first experience stuck with me."***

CU soon became part of family life. Although her school's involvement was limited, Ellie and her parents actively sought out learning destinations and holiday challenges.

"My parents played a massive role," she says. ***"It gave us structure and introduced us to places we wouldn't have found otherwise."***

What began as a way to stay engaged during school holidays became a sustained journey of enrichment and discovery.



Finding Confidence through Experience

Before CU, Ellie described herself as academic but reserved, often avoiding unfamiliar situations.

Through a wide range of enrichment activities, she gradually stepped beyond her comfort zone ***“Confidence is the biggest thing KCU gave me,”*** she says.

Over time, this led to significant milestones, including speaking at assemblies, presenting at graduations and addressing large audiences.

Learning Through Enrichment

Industry Skills Days were particularly impactful. From producing news reports to exploring engineering and broadcasting, Ellie took part in hands-on, collaborative experiences that connected learning to real world contexts.

“You worked in teams, solved problems, and created something together. It made learning feel real.”

I always enjoyed school,” she says. ***“But KCU showed me that learning happens everywhere.”***

These experiences developed essential skills, including communication, teamwork and problem-solving, that continue to underpin her professional life.

The Power of Graduation

Graduation ceremonies were a key milestone, recognising achievement and reinforcing a sense of pride and belonging.

“I loved putting on the purple gown, it made you feel proud.”

Seeing others reach milestones motivated her continued participation.

Her role later evolved from participant to ambassador. She spoke at events, presented awards and supported younger children. ***“One of my favourite moments was when a young girl told me I’d inspired her.”***



“You worked in teams, solved problems, and created something together. It made learning feel real”



Opening Doors to the Future

As a first-generation university student, CU played an important role in making Higher Education feel more accessible and familiar.

Experiences in university settings built her confidence and sense of belonging, supporting her progression into higher education. CU also fostered a mindset of independent, self-directed learning.

“CU taught me that learning doesn’t stop, you can keep exploring.”

From Participant to Professional

After completing her degree in Computer Science, including a year in industry, Ellie began her career in digital services and now works as a Digital Content Designer.

“I enjoy the variety and knowing my work helps people.”

The skills she developed through CU, particularly communication and problem-solving, continue to shape her work.

Ellie remained involved with KCU as an ambassador, supporting events and mentoring younger participants.

“I loved seeing others grow, you could really see the difference.”

She also volunteered at a local Digital Den, introducing children to coding and digital skills.

A Lasting Impact

For Ellie, CU was a consistent and influential part of her childhood.

“It’s been part of my life for as long as I can remember.”

Its impact extends beyond participation, building confidence, broadening horizons and fostering a lasting love of learning beyond the curriculum.



“CU taught me that learning doesn’t stop, you can keep exploring.”



“KCU helped me discover a love of learning beyond the curriculum, giving me confidence, opportunities and a passion for helping others.”

Advice for Today’s CU Members, Schools and Parents



“Take every opportunity you can. Try new things, even if they feel scary. You never know what might shape your future.”

“It’s so worth it. Children gain confidence, purpose and experiences that stay with them.”