



Leanne Adamson

“I joined The Brilliant Club in summer 2013 when the organisation was in a period of significant growth, which included working with schools outside of London for the first time. I was inspired to join the charity after teaching in a deprived area of Newcastle – I was teaching incredible students who were gaining straight A/A* in A-levels but didn’t consider university as a ‘place for them’. I did what I could, including sharing my own personal higher education journey with these students as someone who was the first in my family to attend university, but I recognised that they needed more. So I was excited to join The Brilliant Club, support students to experience university-style learning, and further my own understanding of access into Higher Education.

On my first day at TBC, the organisation grew from seven members of staff to ten. My first role was as a Scholars Programme Officer in West London, but with such a small team, everyone was involved in everything, and I gained a wealth of experience. Within nine months, the charity was expanding to the North of England – the North East quickly followed by the North West and then, a few months later, Yorkshire. I got involved in this expansion from day one, and it led to my progression to North East Regional Manager and then North of England Director, which included setting up the Leeds office. I often joke that being the only northern member of staff (with the added bonus of a Yorkshire accent) and having experience of teaching in Newcastle got me these promotions, but I also realise it was my enthusiasm to be involved in pilot programmes, the hard work of taking on extra responsibilities alongside my day job, and being lucky to join an organisation undergoing so much growth.

I continued to work as Regional Director in The Scholars Programme for a number of years, and my development came from being involved in a number of projects – I became very interested in our virtual learning

environments and evaluation methods, and often supported our IT and Research and Impact teams. Due to staff movements, I was successful in becoming the Director of The Scholars Programme, and following a period of maternity leave and a departmental restructure, I took on the role of Access Programme Director. In this role, I was heavily involved in departmental budgets, staff and HR matters, and increasingly took part in programmatic decision-making at a senior level, such as target setting and determining when to withdraw from programmes.

My final progression at TBC was into the Chief Operating Officer role – this was definitely a big step for me, both into the executive team and from Programmes into Operations. When this role became available, it sparked my interest. I recognised that in my current role I was heavily involved in Programme Operations and that these were the areas I was most interested in (and good at), so I wondered if I could take those skills across the charity. I feel incredibly fortunate that I was successful in gaining the role – probably only at TBC, a charity I had worked at for 10 years, could I make the jump from Programmes to Operations. I have learnt an incredible amount moving into Operations (especially as I have no professional qualifications in operational areas) – knowing so much about the inner workings of TBC definitely helped this move and allowed me to focus on the technical areas I needed to upskill.”