

Below are comments made by our Think Ahead collaborators during 2012-2013

Industrial Career Expo

"I was very impressed with the Industry careers conference that KG organised on behalf of her PhD students. In such a competitive work environment she has given her students the edge by providing insight into a variety of Industry careers. She has helped them think about the options available to them post graduation and the steps needed to make the transition. The speakers I saw were refreshingly honest, helpful and of high quality. The day was professionally organised and I hope the students take the time to thank her after securing their first jobs." *(Dr NL, Regulatory Affairs, Diamond Pharma Services)*

Mentoring Collaboration in the Faculty of MDH

"This mentoring team has transformed the way we work with early career researchers (ECRs), providing significant benefits for all. Notably, this initiative has impacted on the awareness and ability of ECRs to take responsibility for their own careers but benefits are far-reaching. The team strive to engage faculty leaders, and senior academics, and by consulting broadly, and strategically driving the process forward, they have delivered exactly what was needed." *(Academic mentor)*

University wide mentoring scheme (building on the pilot in MDH)

"The University of Sheffield has taken the important step of recognising its responsibility in helping all staff think about their futures in a positive and constructive way. The world of the post-doc researcher can be an uncertain and precarious one but the University has, through its mentoring initiatives, got the balance right between offering mentoring support to early career researchers on the one hand, whilst emphasising individual responsibility for one's own career development on the other." *(Paul Stokes, mentoring scheme collaborator from Sheffield Hallam University)*

Employer engagement

"Thank you so much for alerting your PhD students to our vacancy. I wanted to give you an update to let you know that we have now filled the Electronics vacancy. We did a 2nd interview this week and the candidate was selected for the role and has accepted it. We would now like to advertise another vacancy for someone with an engineering background." *(Large firm of Patent Attorneys who had not previously considered directly targeting PhDs through a university)*

Sheffield University GRAD school (SUGS)

"The University of Cambridge has had a partnership with The University of Sheffield for the last five years based around sharing resources, staff and good practise in GRADschool courses. Although the two GRADschools differ, the relationship has turned into a long term partnership that allows both universities to learn from each other, share resources for the case studies and provide extra tutoring opportunities for the respective team members that allows them to develop their tutoring skills. The Researcher Development Programme at Cambridge has certainly benefitted from working closely with Sheffield on GRADschools." *(Dr Geraint Wyn Story, SUGS Course Director)*

Sheffield Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE)

"As academic responsible for introducing and running the Faculty's SURE scheme I have seen first-hand the benefits of encouraging postdocs to become involved in 'extra' activities away from the lab. SURE has also given many participating postdocs their first real experience of project management and supervision. Some have developed a doctoral training module in critical review, which we now recommend to all our new PGRs (the module is led by one of our SURE veterans, assisted by current and former SURE participants). There is so much to be gained by all involved." *(Faculty academic lead)*

Healthcare Expo (whole day event focusing on Healthcare careers, with 13 guest speakers)

"I thought the careers day was a great idea and I would have found it extremely useful attending an event like this when I was a PhD student and it would have made finding out about other career options away from academic research much easier." *(Dentist & speaker at the day)*

Alumni at Coffee and Careers

"I wish someone had thought to do something similar when I was in the final year of my doctorate! If you weren't going into an academic career, it felt like you were just cut adrift (and, obviously, deemed to have failed....!)." (*Senior Civil Servant*)

Sheffield Crucible

"I've been absolutely blown away by some of the ideas the researcher have come up with . . . all sorts of different things. There is a real diverse mix and Crucible has done what it set out to do." (*External facilitator for Sheffield Crucible*)

Think Ahead as a whole

"I work with approximately 2000 researchers a year in academia and research institutions both in the UK and globally. I have been working with TUoS for four years now, and the Think Ahead initiative stands out for me in a number of ways. It is a truly collaborative project, unique in the way it genuinely brings a collaborative partnership to life. The team bring their subject matter expertise to create unique relationships with the ECR cohort, and their innovative thinking to provide unique, collaborative opportunities for researchers across the board. The work that they do provides a truly valuable insight for ECRs, and many respond with how transformative the interventions are for both their careers and their view of themselves as independent professionals. The team challenge both their target population and their partners to continually strive to be the best that they can be; they are a joy to work with and the results speak for themselves." (*Dr Caron King, Operations Director, The Mindset Method*)

"The Think Ahead team have had a vital impact on early career researchers within the biologies with their progressive approach to supporting and empowering researchers. Through the Think Ahead programme researchers receive many opportunities to network and build confidence. The current research climate is extremely tough with today the definitions of success being closer to the definition of excellence a decade ago." (*Head of Department in the Sciences*)

"ProfNK was singing the praises of the support that we offer post-docs in Sheffield, the success of mentoring and the TA programme." (*TUoS academic feeding back on the comments of an academic from another institution*)

"Great to catch-up over coffee this morning, thanks for the good work of the RPD Team including the support for post-doc fellowship candidates." (*Faculty of Engineering BDM*)

"As Director of External Relations for the Faculty of Science, I often find myself talking to colleagues and peers at other universities about the professional development provided by The University of Sheffield. Particularly in overseas countries whose higher education system is approaching maturity and their needs turn to the development of their research staff. It seems that our lead is something that they would like to follow." (*Mark Geoghegan, Director of Training and External Affairs, Faculty of Science and Director of the Sheffield Science Gateway*)

"The progress on meeting the HRExc Action Plan is coming along nicely and I am pleased to see that such a lot has been achieved already." (*Professor Ian Douglas, Chair of the DRDC, June 2013*)

"It's a pleasure to work with the ThinkAhead programme. It's well-conceived, centred on the needs of the participants and the team are always professional and welcoming." (*Helen Lawrence, HL Training*)

"As a post-doctoral researcher you can sometimes feel excluded from the decision-making processes that happen within your department and wider faculty, but being invited to sit on the departmental Equality and Diversity Committee and the Faculty of Science Researcher Development Committee has allowed me to forge connections with other members of staff, make a contribution to important discussions that effect future outcomes and enabled me to disseminate this information to my colleagues." (*Postdoctoral researcher and department ECR representative on the Faculty Researcher Development Group*)