

## ● Ambassadors for Geography

### ● Society role-models reach thousands of pupils

For someone who once harboured dreams of being a tornado chaser, it seems appropriate that Lucy (24) spends her working day advising on how best to protect people from natural hazards that may one day have a profound effect on their lives.

A development and flood risk officer for the Environment Agency in the Norfolk and Suffolk area where she grew up, Lucy is responsible for examining the risk of flooding posed to developments of varied vulnerability, from residential and commercial through to boat stores.

She is also one of the Society's Geography Ambassadors; a network of more than 500 geographers, either employed graduates or university students, who since 2006 have completed more than 2,000 visits to state secondary schools in England.

Recruited, trained and supported by the Society, ambassadors act as positive role models. By illustrating to pupils in lively ways the transferable skills they have developed, and the many and varied career opportunities geography opens up, they introduce them to the benefits of studying it beyond the compulsory stages of education.

A farmer's daughter with a passion for the natural environment, Lucy "never had a clear career plan", but wanted a job that would enable her to put her BSc (Hons) Geography from King's College, London, into practice. As an ambassador, she explains to pupils why her study of natural disasters has proved so relevant to her work.

"Today's new developments could be around for the next 100 years", she says. "We need to ensure they're sustainable and safe in terms of flood risk, so they don't become a burden for future generations."

Lucy's desire to share her enthusiasm for geography with younger people is shared by Sanjay (22), a final year BSc student at the University of Hertfordshire, who became an ambassador in 2008.



"It's not just about standing up and talking to a class", he says, "It's about interacting with different age groups. I've always found pupils to be really responsive. Most of them have no idea what careers options are available to them. Because I'm not a teacher, they seem to find it easier to relate to me and ask for my advice."

Being an ambassador has really helped me to improve the presentational skills which are fundamental to my degree. I'm free to do as many or as few visits as I have time for, but for each one I undertake, I receive comprehensive support from the Society. You never have to go it alone: I think that's why the scheme's so successful."

Involving more than 50 universities and 40 companies, the Society's ambassador scheme is currently part of the Action Plan for Geography. Funded through the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Action Plan was developed following sustained government lobbying by the Society, in the context of a series of mixed inspection reports for geography teaching at school. It aims to raise the standard of teaching and learning in geography and to elevate its profile.

The number of ambassador visits requested and completed is increasing year on year. In the 12 months leading to April 2010 alone, we have completed more than 1,000 visits.

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