

**Press Release: July 27**

*For immediate release*

**INTU SHOPPING CENTRES OFFER VALUABLE WORK EXPERIENCE TO DISABLED STUDENTS**

Two of the region’s largest shopping centres are giving disabled students the opportunity to develop their skills through valuable work placements.

intu Metrocentre, in Gateshead, and intu Eldon Square, in Newcastle, have both teamed up with The Percy Hedley Foundation to give students from Hedleys College the chance to get a taste of the world of work.

The disability charity, which works to improve the lives of children, young people and adults with cerebral palsy and communication difficulties, set up an Employability Project eight years ago.

Hedleys Employability works with employers to increase employment opportunities for disabled people and it was through this that intu got involved.

Hedleys College currently has two students on work placements at the shopping centres. Ranjit, 21, works in the administration department at intu Metrocentre, while Rafique Uddin, also 21, works with the customer services team at intu Eldon Square.

At college, Ranjit accesses a specialist vocational course for young people aged 16-25 with complex learning needs and multiple disabilities – and trains in one of the pathways on offer, Business Administration.

Ranjit’s placement fits in perfectly with this pathway as her role involves administrative work including office tasks.

“I really enjoy everything about my placement,” Ranjit said. “It’s fun and I get lots of experience of being in the workplace. I’ve made lots of friends too.

“It’s taught me a lot of skills and given me more confidence, and I hope it will help me get a job when I leave college.”

Rafique attends a work placement at intu Eldon Square one day a week and his duties involve answering customer enquiries, working in lost property and carrying out promotional duties in the mall.

“I really like the people there. Even though I’m working they make it really fun and I’ve made some new friends,” Rafique said.

“The tasks I do have made me feel a lot more comfortable about being out in the community and I feel much more confident than I did before I started.”

Clare Savory, Community Manager at intu said: “We are delighted to support students from Hedley’s College. It has been fantastic to see Ranjit and Rafique’s confidence grow and develop in their roles and we are thrilled to be able offer that vital work experience.

“Our staff thoroughly enjoys having them as part of their teams. We look forward to working with the College in September to take on more students.”

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Captions:

Photo1: Rafique Uddin has been on work placement at intu Eldon Square

Photo2: Ranjit Kaur at her desk on placement at intu Metrocentre

Notes to Editors

**The Percy Hedley Foundation is a registered charity that works to help meet the needs of disabled children, young people and adults.**

**The Foundation is one of the largest regional charities supporting disabled people and provides a wide range of high quality, specialist and personalised care and education support to over 1,000 families each year.**

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