Who are Urban Beings?
Urban Beings engages toddlers with the environment through a series of Treasure Hunts using what is already in the city. Set up by Yatwan Hui, an Urban Designer lecturer at Bath University with a degree in architecture and a Masters in Sustainable Urban Design (Sweden), the inspiration was a desire to teach young people how to love their city and not destroy their own community.

It was also inspired by her two and a half year old nephew whose excitement in seeing new things encouraged her to capture the experience on film through his eyes. Based on architecture, open spaces, people and transport, Toddle in the City was born.

How did UCL help?
Urban Beings was established in 2010 and Toddle in the City launched in March 2011. Whilst there was initial business advice from friends and family, Yat required more support such as strategic input and help regarding operational efficiency.

UCL Advances matched Yat with Clive Brazier, a mentor with strong SME experience specialising in operations, process and analysis who saw his role as a sounding board and confidante who could bring structure, direction and discipline whilst keeping an open mind.

Clive immediately helped with the business rationale and addressed the things that are always a problem for start-up businesses; time management, income, priorities, organisational structure and process, and juggling the different roles/hats. He taught Yat to move away from being the 'architectural perfectionist' and move to being a business person – questioning what was critical, what was nice to have and to look at the cause and effect a decision can have.

The immediate barriers were identified, achievable targets and milestones were set and they worked backwards to form a plan with small manageable projects so Yat was less overwhelmed with the task ahead. Yat could re-focus on things that would deliver rather than the more distracting and attractive tasks, such as producing a promotional trailer without any experience or promotional channels.

“I essentially didn’t want Yat to make the same mistakes I made such as missing early business opportunities due to lack of organisational governance.”

Clive Brazier, Business Mentor
About UCL
UCL (University College London) was established in 1826 and is ranked as one of the world’s top-ten universities. The university is a modern, outward-looking institution, with more than 4,000 academic and research staff committed to engaging with the major issues of our times. It has a global reach, with 34% of its students coming from outside the UK, from almost 140 countries.

www.ucl.ac.uk

About UCL Advances
The centre for entrepreneurship at UCL, UCL Advances, offers training, networking and business support for staff, students and external entrepreneurs to encourage and enable new enterprises to get going. Unique in the UK Higher Education sector, its primary role is to promote a culture of entrepreneurship on campus and engagement with entrepreneurs and small businesses beyond UCL’s boundaries, and currently delivers over 30 activity programmes.

UCL Advances is affiliated with UCL Enterprise, which provides UCL’s structures for engaging with business for commercial and societal benefit.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances
www.ucl.ac.uk/enterprise

About Business Support
UCL Advances provides direct business support for internal and external organisations through a variety of programmes and activities such as 1–1 advice, problem solving through student consultancy, student internships, mentoring and others.

• We help London-based businesses grow and develop by analysing business needs and connecting them to relevant interventions such as industry mentors;
• Through pairing teams of UCL and LBS students with businesses we deliver short-term consultancy projects addressing specific organisation needs;
• We broker relationships and fund exchanges between new and aspiring entrepreneurs with experienced entrepreneurs in another member state of the European Union;
• Individual angel investors connected to UCL provide seed investment to SMEs engaged with UCL Advances programmes; and
• We offer fully funded SME Internships where UCL students spend eight weeks in a London SME working alongside the director(s) to deliver real results and lasting impact in the host organization whilst learning about enterprise.

www.ucl.ac.uk/advances/business/support

What were the results?
Without Clive, Yat admits she wouldn’t have progressed as quickly. Toddle in the City sessions have increased for this year to 3 sessions a day over the weekend, whereas last year it was very ad hoc with little continuity.

Yat has recently worked with a nursery school in Harringay which presents more opportunities for mid-week activities and may lead to employing another person.

To extend the seasonality of the offering, Yat is also looking at different Toddler niches and markets, for example; Toddle School, Toddle Museum and Toddle Birthday Parties.

Clive has helped explore the vision for the future which has given a clear focus to the business and has clarified the potential opportunities with a franchise model. There is already interest from cities in Germany, Italy and Sweden.

2013 is about perfecting the product offering with a view to rolling out a franchise in 2014 and this vision is as a result of the mentor and company working in harmony. One of the surprising upsides for Clive was discovering ‘how many wonderful spaces there are in London despite living here for a long time!’ whilst for Yat, the mentoring programme ‘more than exceeded expectations’.