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WHAT DO YOU DO?

As a policy officer, my responsibility can be summed up as follows: to share new and relevant information in a timely manner to those who make big decisions in local government. As a result of this, the actual performance of my job involves a lot of different tasks. These can include research, analysis, agenda-setting, consultation response, and even some networking and presentation!

HOW HAS THE APPRENTICESHIP HELPED YOU IN YOUR WORK?

Part of what appealed to me about the apprenticeship on offer was how well it lined up with policy as a field. Several of the modules talked about governance, the manner in which legitimate decisions are made, and also about how to correctly analyse policymaking. Other modules that were interesting included leadership strategies and research methods; both great for future career development.

In addition, a portfolio of evidence was required to pass, wherein your at-work experiences were used to “show your learning” in a real-life environment. As someone who was relatively new to policy as a vocation at the start of the Masters, it felt like a great way to jump-start my career and learn some useful, practical, skills while also being able to work at my regular job.

WHAT WAS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF THE APPRENTICESHIP?

Besides that single moment of complete relief when I was told that my dissertation had received a good mark, I'd say that the most rewarding element of my masters would be that feeling you get of “peering under the bonnet”. I studied Politics for my undergraduate degree, so government was by no means new to me. However, the masters gave me an insight as to how it all fits together. Witnessing these moments in meetings, cross-organisational projects or other problem-solving situations is interesting, and assisted me in understanding how best to use these approaches myself.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE DOING AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Rewarding! I'm not going to say it wasn't difficult. There were weekends spent in libraries for assignments, last-minute revisions of dissertations that kept me on tenterhooks, and a lot of reading to power through. However, I was supported every step of the way by both the University of Birmingham, and my employers. I started the course while I was still working at Suffolk County Council, and both there and at EELGA I found that my line managers were exceptionally supportive. Not only did they accept that a certain amount of my at-work time would need to be spent on my Masters reading, but they also looked to contribute to my portfolio whenever they could, giving me opportunities to put into practice what I had learned.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO WORK IN?

Yes! I worked in the private sector for several years before moving over, and I feel that employees are much better looked after in the local government sector. Line managers care about your wellbeing and career development, and there's this wonderful feeling that you're contributing to a much larger whole, rather than just private good.