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WHAT MADE YOU APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP ROLE?

An apprenticeship was the perfect opportunity to build on the practical skills I had already gained in my previous role whilst completing a Social Work degree. I chose an apprenticeship as I believe the combination of work and study would allow me to directly apply what I was learning into practice within a workplace setting. The apprenticeship has given me excellent opportunities to work in both Adult and Children's social care and the experience has been invaluable.

HOW HAVE YOU FOUND THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING AN APPRENTICE?

The apprenticeship has provided an excellent mixture of work experience and study. The local authority has been an excellent support and provided me with the ability to have a good work/life balance.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE WORKING AND STUDYING AT THE SAME TIME?

Studying while working is definitely not an easy task. However, if you are determined to reach your goal, you make it work. Luckily, I have been supported both by the University of Suffolk and management within Suffolk County Council to ensure I have time to complete my university work while still being a valued member of the workforce within my rotation.

WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE?

I am currently working within a Children's and Young Persons Team. For me personally, the day starts at 8:45am and the work can vary day to day depending on the cases you are working on. Home visits both planned and unannounced, report writing, Social Work assessments, team meetings, training. It all depends, but no day is the same!

HOW HAS COVID-19 IMPACTED YOUR ROLE/APPRENTICESHIP?

Only inasmuch as I am working from home, I do miss the camaraderie of the office environment, but the team are so supportive, and I always feel I can speak to someone if necessary. I think it depends on what kind of person you are, but for me, I have found it has been fine and I can spend more time with my dog!

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BENEFITS OF AN APPRENTICESHIP?

The benefits are huge. The obvious being that the degree is fully funded, which would have been a barrier to me completing the course. The support is excellent both from Suffolk County Council and from the University, which has been impressive given the pandemic. The ability to learn something one week and then put it into practice the next has meant that the degree is already having an impact on my social work practice, which ultimately means the people I am working with are receiving a better service.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT SINCE BECOMING AN APPRENTICE?

I think my biggest achievement has been recognising that I actually have academic potential which has been unlocked throughout the apprenticeship and through the support from my tutors. I feel like I am growing both professionally and personally and that the knowledge I am gaining is positively impacting my practice.

WHAT'S BEEN THE MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR APPRENTICESHIP SO FAR?

Definitely the progression I have made so far. My grades have been getting better as time goes on, and the feedback from my colleagues and peers has been very positive. Don't get me wrong the course is very demanding, however, I think just being able to have the opportunity to study whilst working within the field is a privilege and I am very grateful for the opportunity.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND AN APPRENTICESHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO SOMEONE CONSIDERING ONE?

Definitely! I would say grab the opportunity with both hands, but be prepared to work very hard, this is not an easy route, and it requires determination and discipline, but don't let that put you off if you want to achieve your goal.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH CAREER-WISE OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Hopefully, I will have completed my Social Work degree and have undertaken my AYSE year with Suffolk County Council. I would like to be working in a Children's and Young Peoples Team within Suffolk and working towards progression in my role. I may even start a Masters, who knows!