



Georgie Lowe, Operational Delivery Apprenticeship, Central Bedfordshire Council

I'm Georgie Lowe, 23, and I completed an Operational Delivery Apprenticeship in the Independent Living Team at Central Bedfordshire Council - gaining a level 3 qualification and starting a permanent position within Housing Services following my apprenticeship. I have since achieved a promotion into the Housing Options Team.

Why did you choose an apprenticeship?

I chose to do an apprenticeship with Central Bedfordshire Council as I wanted to learn and gain experience at the same time. I was unsure of what to expect at first and was very nervous of what it may entail, but it was a truly rewarding experience.

What did your apprenticeship involve?

During my apprenticeship, I was working within a customer facing role whilst managing my time to complete my coursework and attend my exams. I had many tasks to complete during the day, one of my favourites was the daily calls to all the residents in the mornings. I also completed presentations and presented to my colleagues, hosted fundraisers, managed my own caseload and at one point I even managed my own scheme of 12 residents. I also lead many different activity groups as an apprentice, but my favourite was the bounce & rhyme baby group I hosted.

What experience have you gained?

Throughout my apprenticeship, I gained a lot of experience in different areas. I was able to move to different teams during my apprenticeship and shadow their job meaning I not only gained experience in more area than one, but I also built relationships with other colleagues and that continues to help me to this day. I learnt many different roles in a short amount of time and what is expected of each team, and that still helps me to know where to refer someone. I also gained a lot of knowledge on the services the council provide to the public and experienced many different types of cases. This has helped me progress into an empathic officer.

How did/does the Independent Living Team at Central Bedfordshire Council help you with your personal development?

The independent Living Team provided us apprentices with self-development folders with competencies that we needed to sign off throughout our apprenticeship. They could be signed off by managers or colleagues. This was motivating and kept us busy, as we always had a goal to work towards. This helped me to develop my personal skills, gain experience and achieve goals within the workplace.

What was the steepest learning curve?

I'd say my steepest learning curve throughout my apprenticeship was learning effective time management. At points, I struggled to complete all my tasks within the time frame and would struggle to balance the apprenticeship and the office-based workload, but through trial and error I created my own way of working that works for me. Sometimes it can feel impossible to do it all until you take a step back and put structure in place. I found using my calendar to organise my days was the most useful tool and gave me time periods for each task throughout the day.

What has been your biggest achievement so far?

My biggest achievement so far, besides passing my apprenticeship and gaining my qualification, is definitely the "Bounce & Rhyme" sessions I planned, organised, and hosted for babies and toddlers whilst being an apprentice to enhance building engagement at Priory View. Bounce and Rhyme was a thoroughly enjoyable experience for me and to take ownership of that as an apprentice was a massive achievement for me.

How have you been supported by your colleagues?

Many colleagues supported me through my apprenticeship by booking time in for me to shadow them, signing off my competencies and giving me tasks to build my skills. They also understood I had essays and exams, so gave me any time I needed to revise/work on my assignments. Whilst working I was made to feel like an officer and not just an apprentice.

What's the culture like in the Independent Living Team at Central Bedfordshire Council?

The Independent Living Team have a 'can do' attitude. The culture is positive, and customer focussed. I would say the ILT are a very approachable team. Team members are always happy to help and offer advice to other colleagues and always go the extra mile for our customers. We have a strong development culture and believe in training, support, and personal development. As well as my apprenticeship qualification I was required to be signed off on all role-based competencies and attend further training in other areas including Professional Boundaries, Resilience and Dementia Awareness. Overall, I found that the independent living team was very welcoming, and I made a lot of positive working relationships with my colleagues. I knew I could approach any member of the team with a problem, and they would do all they can to help me.

What is your advice for someone who is thinking about applying for an apprenticeship in local government?

I would advise anyone considering applying to just go for it! Before I started, I was almost sure I didn't have enough knowledge to be able to work here and since starting, it's helped me grow in so many ways. I don't regret my journey to where I am at now. Local government has so many ways you can develop your skills and understanding, an opportunity to build your skills and gain so much experience. It is such a rewarding opportunity and hard work really does pay off!