

Life under lockdown as an apprentice

Marnie shares her experience so far...



Hello! My name is Marnie and I have now been working for Devon County Council for almost three years, joining on an apprenticeship. My current job title is Participation Worker for South and West Devon. My role includes running Children in Care and Care leaver groups monthly,

creating countywide events to mark important occasions such as Takeover Day and facilitating Youth Parliament campaigning locally. Most importantly, I make sure that our Devon young people have the opportunity to talk about what is important to them.

When I first joined DCC, I came in on a Higher Level Personal Assistant apprenticeship where I undertook Level 4 Business Administration. This was a perfect fit for me as I had no clue where I wanted to be next year, let alone in five year's time. The apprenticeship was flexible and put me in several placements within the organisation, including Highways, Finance, Adult Social Care and Children Social Care. Moving around grew my understanding of what I was professionally interested in doing and built my report with Senior Managers and Heads of Services as I supported them closely. From here, my passion for working in Children's Services grew and working for the Head of Children's Social Care and their senior management team meant I could learn alongside them and discover volunteering opportunities that would be relevant.

The apprenticeship team had a calendar of sessions to get involved in throughout my apprenticeship, these included workshops on interviews, finances and public speaking. We also had the opportunity to volunteer in our local areas and give back to the community. Me and my cohort went to Stover Country Park and planted 600 trees for the day. Alongside this, I could also join the YAAN which is the Young Apprentice Ambassador Network. The YAAN is a collection of apprentices who go into schools, career fairs and organisations to speak about their apprenticeship experience and what the

pros/cons were for them. We meet four times a year and also have a training session to prepare you for entering schools and talking openly about your learning experience.

Doing all of the above in the two years I was an apprentice meant that I communicated with all levels of the organisation from visitors to the chief executive. The apprenticeship team also created opportunities like the volunteering to help us get in touch with our local area and championing the YAAN meant we meet with business owners and apprentices from all over the South West. I am a strong advocate for apprenticeships and will always suggest them to those around me who are unsure of what to do after school or if they want to change their career pathway. My advice to those who are looking into them is to see if there are vacancies in a particular organisation you are interested in. You will then be able to build a report with your colleagues whilst learning and discover opportunities within that business.

During lockdown, I am still working! Albeit virtually, I now run my children in care and care leaver groups over Zoom three times a week. I have also had more time to commit to admin tasks and forward planning for the year and being able to help out with other services like the Step Forward team in Apprenticeships. Although our role focuses heavily on face to face contact with our young people, we have been able to build up the online groups to be popular and engaging and also have 1-1 Facetime sessions frequently with those who want too. I feel like it has also bonded our team closer together as we have had the time to be able to communicate properly with each other and have a 15 minute coffee morning catch up over Teams!

Outside of work, I've been trying to learn as much stuff as possible that I would usually put off due seeing friends or having plans. My mum's hobby is dancing so she has been teaching me how to Jive and Lindy Bop, a new skill I will be taking on a night out when this is over! I have also been trying to do Yoga every morning and a home workout every afternoon but I do struggle to stay motivated. I also became an auntie to a new puppy... a little dachshund so she is getting all our love and attention at the moment!