

ODP Apprenticeships: Luke's Story

After successfully finishing internship at the Department for Transport (DfT), I knew I wanted to work within the Civil Service. I made it my quest to work there and be one of the 16% of autistic people in full-time employment. After the internship I returned to Sixth Form, where it did not go unnoticed how much I had grown in confidence and determination.

The following year I was invited back to the programme to give a speech to the 2019 interns, at the opening ceremony of the internship. It was great to be back and I got lots of positive feedback from the Autism Exchange, people at the Civil Service and the interns. That gave me so much ambition, confidence and determination to make sure that I found a role for myself within the Civil Service.

A few weeks after my speech a role came up for an apprenticeship within Cabinet Office working in the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel (OPC). As soon as I saw this position it instantly appealed to me. Also, the role had many similarities to the job I did whilst on my internship. So, for those reasons I decided to apply.

There was an online application followed by tests to complete. As they were mainly competency based, the experience I gained on the internship was invaluable for completing these. I got through to the interview stage for the role. When I attended the interview, I felt that this was my chance to accomplish my dream of both becoming one of the 16% of autistic people in full-time employment and to get into the Civil Service. Even though I was very nervous attending the interview I knew that it was my opportunity to shine and show who I am. I made sure that I locked the nerves away and I tried my hardest to get the role, using the knowledge and experience I had gained.

A few days after the interview I received an email about the outcome. I was very nervous when I saw the email in my inbox. I opened it, only to see the word saying 'Congratulations'. I jumped for joy as I knew I was one step closer to my dream.

I started last September (2020) and ever since then I have really enjoyed my time at the OPC. I have got involved with so many interesting and unique things that I am forever grateful for. Also, within the OPC everyone has been very supportive and welcoming to me and I really enjoy working here.

Recently I have also become part of the Cabinet Office Apprentice Network (COAN) and taken on the role of Intranet Team Lead. This is a great opportunity to network with other apprentices and work together on a project. Everyone is friendly and supportive and we enjoy collaborating with each other.

I am forever grateful of the opportunities that the Civil Service, OPC, DfT, Ambitious about Autism and COAN have given me. I highly encourage departments

to sign up to the Autism Exchange Programme and make other autistic peoples dreams come true.

The Future plans for myself as an apprentice is to complete my Business Administration Level 3 Apprenticeship to a high standard and after that I am hoping to build a career in the Civil Service as I have really enjoyed my experiences here and loads of people have welcomed me and made me feel part of a team straight away.