

James Baughan Recycling Project Co-ordinator at Oxford City Council

About the role

1. Can you give a brief overview of your career to date?

I graduated from QMUL with a BSc in Environmental Science in 2014. I've always liked the idea of 'doing something good' and working for a local authority and fell into my job after applying for the only environmental job advertised in my local area!



I started off as a Waste Monitoring Officer, doing recycling data analysis and inputting the data into the Council's database and national WaterDataFlow system; digitally mapping performance across Oxford (using ArcGIS), by generating statistics for discrete areas of the city; and then using that data to determine where to target campaigns. I actively assisted with my team's projects, taking part in door-knocking, roadshows and other promotional activities across Oxford. In this role I also helped our authority to win £350,000 of government funding to run a recycling rewards scheme, which I now run in my new role as Recycling Project Coordinator.

My next step will be covering my manager's job whilst she goes on maternity leave.

2. What does your current role involve (e.g. key responsibilities)?

My current role involves managing staff, a budget and our social media accounts. I deal with the day to day duties of the Promotions Officers who work on the project and work closely with the Recycling Team to deal with all enquiries relating to the project and the wider recycling and waste service. This involves a good deal of customer service and project management.

I'm currently working on an extension of our recycling rewards scheme and other funding applications.

3. What does a typical day involve?

Lots of advance planning! Planning our social media posts, campaigns and the tasks of the staff that work on my project. Ensuring our goals are met or exceeded.

4. What attracted you to your job?

I studied Environmental Science as it's a personal interest and something I always wanted to work in. Local authorities work for local people and make positive changes, something I believe I do on a daily basis.

5. What do you most enjoy about your current role?

It's varied. I'm mainly office-based, but regularly get to meet residents at events that we work at.

6. What do you find most challenging / least enjoy about your current role?

You can't do everything at once – procedures have to be followed and things take time to achieve and implement.

7. Do you need any specialist knowledge, skills or experience to do your current role?

My environmental background and knowledge of GIS helped. It's also important to have an enthusiasm for helping to improve recycling and waste reduction.

A basic understanding of environmental legislation is also useful.

8. What's the working environment like in your role/sector?

Our standard working week is 37 hours, however we work flexibly so can work less (or more!) one week to the next, so long as everything works out. I can start any time from 7am up to 10am and usually try to do 8-4, as I like leaving early! I work with a team of 10 people, along with many other teams, external organisations and the public.

Career and experiences to date

9. How did you find your first job after university?

I looked on the jobs pages of all my local councils.

10. What was the most useful thing you did before you graduated that you think helped you get your current job/first job after university?

My dissertation! The topic I chose gave me a practical understanding of data analysis and knowledge of landfills, which helped my first role at Oxford City Council. So it's helpful if you can pick a topic that you think you'd like to take further into a job role after graduating (of course, this isn't always possible, as not everyone knows what they want to do after university – I certainly didn't!!).

Being a Geography Ambassador at QMUL helped boost my confidence, especially in public speaking. This is really useful for my current job which involves lots of presentations! I also did some work as a researcher for The Careers Group, collecting and organising sensitive data regarding graduate destinations 6 months after graduation. Working there was fun and gave me basic research skills, as well as confidence with speaking on the phone.

In general, I'd say any work experience you can do (whether voluntary or paid) is useful, as you'll learn a variety of skills, which you can transfer to a job application after you graduate.

Advice to students

11. What tips would you give to current students wanting to get into your current sector/job?

Go for it! Before any job interview, do your homework! Do a little research about the organisation you're applying to.

12. How can students find out more about this sector?

Some local authorities may offer work experience – get in touch with some and see what they can offer.

Further information

Find out more about careers in Local Government, including where to look for jobs, at: <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/working-in-industry/2103/local-government>

Read the 'Recycling Officer' job profile on the Prospects website at:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/recycling-officer>

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