



Science and Engineering



Sadie Sweetland

What led you to apply for the Civil Service Fast Stream programme?

I studied Biomedical Sciences at university and, while I loved learning about science, I couldn't see myself working in a laboratory. I finished university and worked for different healthcare communication companies, where I realised that I enjoyed making complex scientific information engaging and accessible. This led me to do a part-time master's in Science Communication alongside work, where my interest in science in government started.

What attracted you to the programme and this particular stream?

I knew I wanted to communicate and embed science and engineering in government, but I had no idea which department or area I wanted to work in. The Science and Engineering Fast Stream attracted me because it allows me to rotate around departments and roles to find the best fit for me.

My background is health, but my favourite posting so far was working on environmental assessment reform in the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) – a department and area that I never would have thought of before.

How did you first hear about the programme?

I heard about it during my undergraduate studies, but I didn't realise my training as a scientist would be relevant to government. It took doing a science policy module during my master's to realise just how important it is to communicate science and engineering effectively in government.

How have the projects you have worked on helped deliver better services for the people of the UK? What was your contribution?

I have found all my roles extremely fulfilling because you can see how your work will have a positive impact on society.

On my secondment to the Wellcome Trust, I facilitated the work that governments are doing to create an ecosystem that can effectively respond to global health threats by supporting the 100 Days Mission to make effective and affordable vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics available within 100 days of the next potential pandemic.

I was also involved in promoting the effects of climate change on health to initiate action in the space. No other career offers you the same satisfaction that your work is really making a difference!

Describe any barriers you faced throughout the application process. How did you overcome them?

It took me three tries to get onto the Fast Stream. To begin with, I didn't really understand how the tests would work. I would recommend trying to find some examples or reading up on how these are structured beforehand.

On my final try, I got through the tests but was then faced with the Civil Service Behaviours which were like a different language to me. I didn't know any civil servants to ask, but I spoke to friends of friends to get a sense of how I should structure my answers (remember the STAR method!) and practised my answers a lot before.

I'd recommend reaching out to current Fast Streamers through LinkedIn for advice or taking advantage of outreach through networks like the Fast Stream Social Mobility Network and the FDA Union. They do a lot of work in facilitating socio-economic inclusion across the Fast Stream.