



Summer Internship Programme (SIP)



Saffron Howdle

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

I applied to the Fast Stream three times in total. I was drawn to the opportunity to pursue a career that is challenging and rewarding. I am keen to work in a role that will benefit others, whilst also providing me with a changing environment.

What attracted you to the programme and this particular stream?

I have always loved organising things, and that passion became even clearer when involved in university societies. I also love collaborating with others and taking on challenges. All of this is included in Project Delivery.

Tell us a little bit about yourself. Are you a recent graduate? Or were you seeking a career change?

I am a recent graduate. I studied for a bachelor's in History and Politics and a master's in Historical Research before joining the Civil Service. Studying history has been useful in allowing me to take large amounts of information and collate it into a cohesive strategy or narrative for teams to pull together.

Tell us about your Civil Service Fast Stream experience. What kind of projects have you been involved in?

I am in my first year with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). I joined the department at a turbulent time, but I think this has only added to my experiences. I have seen a broad range of policies, projects, methods and leadership styles – which has helped me learn more about Project Delivery and the type of leader I want to become.

I am based in Sheffield but I often travel to London. I enjoy meeting my regional colleagues and making connections outside of my team.

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

I am part of the Programme Office in my team and I support leads working on all the projects within our division. Some of the biggest impacts to date include unlocking unused sites in areas that are in need of regeneration and seeing disused buildings becoming the centre of communities.

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

The biggest barrier I faced was my understanding of leadership. Prior to doing this programme, I understood leadership as getting results as quickly and efficiently as possible. However, I now do not believe that to be true. I now focus on inclusive leadership, ensuring all my teammates bring their whole selves to work, feel supported to think in innovative ways and push boundaries. For me, this is more what the Civil Service is about. It's about getting results, but in a way that fosters an environment that brings all types of people around the table.

What advice would you give to someone else considering applying to the Civil Service Fast Stream programme?

Take a look at the Civil Service Behaviours. Try to always think innovatively. How can things be done better? What creative solutions are there to complex problems? Try to push your boundaries. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. We improve the most when outside our comfort zone.