

Career Fast Track at Central Bedfordshire

Alison Munt is now on a secondment managing Dunstable North Locality Team in the Family Support Service, just five years after beginning her career in social work on the Step Up to Social Work Programme.

She said: “Central Bedfordshire was among the first councils to do the Step Up to Social Work Programme in 2010. It was aimed at people from alternative industries who also have experience of working with children and families and thinking about a career in social work.

“You need a 2:1 degree to get onto the programme, and as well as doing three practical placements of 40, 60 and 100 days, you complete a Masters in social work.”

The business studies graduate continued: “I started my career as a sales executive for a greetings card company working my way to a management position before I took a career break to have my children.

“I worked as a teaching assistant and a child minder while my children were young and that helped to push me towards applying for the Step Up Programme.”

Along with the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, which is run by the Academy of Social Work and Early Intervention – a joint enterprise between the council and the University of Bedfordshire – the Step Up to Social Work Programme is a great way of getting into the field of social work.

Alison did her longest placement with the council’s Family Support Team, as well as spending time with them between placements. And she says that helped her to gain more experience as well as swaying her towards applying for a job with the council, as she was able to continue working with the families she has been supporting and in a team she enjoyed being part of.

Since taking on a permanent role with the council in 2012, Alison said that she has had plenty of opportunities to develop personally and professionally – thanks to her own personal drive and support from her managers.

Alison said: “I was fortunate to have managerial experience coming into the programme, so I was used to managing people and meeting deadlines.

“However, I have also been able to take part in the Aspiring Managers Programme as well as benefitting from a very supportive manager who guided me through her role, gave me an idea what it was about and that meant that when I stepped up into my managerial role it was a much easier transition as I had a greater awareness of what I was doing.

“In my time with the council I have had the opportunity to access learning and development training opportunities as well as completing various other Masters

modules including Embedding Professional Capabilities, Complex Decision Making and Practice Education.

“For me it’s about my career progression, what interests me and what will be beneficial in the future. Central Bedfordshire is a good local authority to work for. The council looks after its staff well, and there are good learning and development opportunities which are well promoted. There is also good managerial development here.

“I have obviously gone up through the ranks so I knew the team and the culture of the organisation, which helped me when I started my secondment.

“I love working in social work. It’s an interesting career, every day really is different and I still get an adrenaline rush from the job.”

If you’re thinking about a career in social work, or want to see what opportunities exist for progressing your career, visit www.loveyourjobagain.com