



My Intern Experience in the Austerity and Altered Life-Courses team

Summer 2023

I'm Shannon Jones, a recent Sociology and Criminology graduate from the University of Manchester who has just completed an 8-week summer internship at the University of Manchester, whereby I worked with the Austerity and Altered Life courses team as a policy research intern on their new anti-poverty project. This internship was a truly valuable experience and it provided me with the perfect opportunity to bridge the gap between university and graduate life, allowing me to build on the skills that I already have, whilst providing me with new skills when applying for roles after university.

As a Sociology and Criminology graduate, I have always been interested in contributing towards correcting inequalities. I have taken modules such as 'Race and Resistance in Education' where I created a charter that provided actions that schools in the UK could take to become anti-racist. I have also volunteered and worked in non-profit organisations that could generally be described as 'anti-poverty organisations. These include: an organisation that supported disadvantaged families by providing practical support, a period poverty organisation where I packed and distributed parcels to those experiencing period poverty and a community centre as a youth worker where I worked in a team to plan and run fun and educational activities for young people. From these experiences in life, I was sure that I wanted to work in either the non-profit sector or the public sector when I left university, so that I could continue to contribute towards change. However, I did not know what type of roles to pursue in in these sectors. When I came across the advertisement for this internship, it immediately caught my attention.

I was introduced to this role in my second semester of my final year at university by my academic advisor as this role was advertised to humanities students like me. As a third-year student, I was not originally planning on completing an internship at the end of my degree as I knew that many people complete internships in the summer following their second year of university. However, I saw that this internship was offered to final year students, it involved working in on an anti-poverty project and involved researching and writing about anti-poverty organisations. This appealed to me due to my previous work experience with anti-poverty organisations, my desire to continue to work with them and I had developed a desire to continue to do research following the writing of my dissertation, 'An Investigation into How Young Black/White Mixed-race Adults in Britain Navigate their Identity and Sense of Belonging'. I saw this as the perfect opportunity for me to combine my experiences, ambitions for my career and curiosity for research and policy reform and it turns out that it was!

During this internship I produced a report that reviewed current anti-poverty strategies and work in Greater Manchester. My supervisors allowed me to lead this report and supported

me to take it in whichever direction I wanted to. For this report they suggested that I speak with some representatives from local councils and local non-profit organisations for some information surrounding anti-poverty strategies and work. I thought that this was important for my work too and I was keen to do this. I was supported by my supervisor Liz with drafting emails to send to these representatives. Drafting professional emails was not something that I had much experience with and so this was really useful for my professional development. I also drafted some questions to ask the representatives, which my supervisor also looked over for me before I met with them.

I also created a map of anti-poverty support services across Greater Manchester during this internship, which, like my report, was led by me and my supervisors supported me to take this in whichever direction I wanted to. This gave me a chance to explore different mapping software, which I did not previously have experience with, and at the end of my internship I had mapped over 100 support services for those in Manchester.

Although the report and the map were my two main tasks for the internship, I also had the opportunity to do other things too. In my first few days I attended Manchester Central Foodbank's anti-poverty summit with one of my supervisors where I networked with other organisations working towards anti-poverty. This was a great chance for me to get myself out there and gain potential connections that I can use for the future. My supervisor also supported me with setting meetings up with people from local councils and non-profit organisations in Manchester, which also provided me with another opportunity to make connections and delve into what it is like working for these organisations and how to gain a role in them. I know that connections can be really beneficial when leaving university and starting a career and so this was also really key for my professional development.

As you can see from what I have written, this internship has helped me with report writing, using new mapping software, improving my administrative skills such as email writing and networking. These are key skills to have when applying for jobs after university! It has also ignited within me a passion for policy and research which has provided me with the confidence to apply for policy and research roles in the non-profit sector and the public sector as I know that I have the skills from this internship for these roles.

To anyone who is interested in a career in policy or research or anyone who has a desire to contribute towards change like me, an internship with this team is a great opportunity to not only provide you with some experience for when you graduate university, but also to see whether a career in policy or working with non-profit organisations is for you. I had the best experience working with this team and I cannot recommend this internship enough.