

# Starting my apprenticeship at IBC

**Name:** Lisa Baxter

**Job title:** Business Support Apprentice

**Apprenticeship start date:**18/10/2021

**Why did you choose an apprenticeship?**

For example, were you considering going to college/uni, or did you want to earn-while-you-learn? Did you want to change career? What appealed to you about doing an apprenticeship?

I was made redundant from my job in retail and wanted to try something completely different. I wanted to work in an office environment but all of the jobs required office or administration experience, which I didn't have. I thought that I would be more likely to be accepted onto an apprenticeship, as you don't necessarily need experience, just a willingness to learn and develop. I also wanted to work towards a nationally recognised qualification that I could put on my CV and help me to secure a range administration jobs in the future.

**Why did you choose to apply for an apprenticeship with IBC?**

As I was made redundant from my previous role I was looking for a job that was secure with a low risk of redundancy. The range of job roles within IBC also really appealed to me, and I think that my apprenticeship will be a good starting block from which I can explore a variety of career options. Serving my community was also a big reason to join IBC as I like helping people and making a difference to their lives.

**How did you find out about the vacancy for your apprenticeship?**

My work coach suggested that I consider apprenticeships as they are a good way of earning a living while learning new skills at the same time. I was looking at job vacancies for the council and noticed that there were vacancies on the website for apprenticeships, so I took my work coach's advice and applied.

**What was the interview process like?**

Nerve-wracking? Fun?

I was quite nervous and apprehensive because I hadn't had an interview for a few years, and I had never had a virtual interview before. The first part was two tests to see how proficient I was on Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. I enjoyed the Word test but felt slightly out of my depth with the Excel one. However, the two people hosting the first part of the interview made me feel very comfortable and put me at ease. The second part of the interview was with two managers asking me questions. At first I was a little nervous but I felt well prepared for their questions and soon felt more confident.

**How did you feel about starting work with IBC, and what was it *actually* like?**

Were you excited/nervous? What happened on your first day? Any surprises?

I wasn't nervous at all on my first day, as I had already met the person who was going to be showing me around. I thought that the office experience was going to be a lot more formal than it was, but everyone was very friendly and approachable. I was surprised at how quiet it was in the office, as most people are still working from home. I was surprised to find out how varied the work is on the Systems team and how much there is to do.

**Describe your typical day at work and what you like most about your role?**

My mornings are spent completing the daily and weekly reconciliation tasks, which involves looking on council tax reports and balancing the figures on spreadsheets and investigating any imbalances that might occur. I have recently been trained on FDM procedure so I do that in the morning too. This involves creating a Data Despatch form every day and filling it in with information for FDM (the company that prints and sends out correspondence)

regarding how many pages are to be printed. The day is then spent keeping an eye on the systems inbox as reports come in, filing them away into specific folders and forwarding any emails to FDM about new letters that come through. The afternoons are spent completing any training I still have outstanding, having regular meetings with my mentor so she can train me on more aspects of the role and working on the Microsoft Excel training that my mentor has suggested I do.

I like how flexible my hours are and having the option to work from home. My team are really supportive and I know that they are always approachable if I have any issues or need help or more training on something. I feel that I have had good quality training on any tasks I am expected to complete and feel I can deliver them with confidence.

**How are you finding studying for the qualification?**

How are you combining work with study time? What's it like working with your assessor? What key things have you learned so far?

At the moment I am completing my work tasks in the morning and catching up with training in the afternoon which seems to be working well for me and my team. I haven't met my assessor yet but I am keeping a detailed record of all the tasks I have been trained on.

**What support do you receive as an apprentice?**

What support do you receive from your manager, work colleagues, college, etc.

I speak to my mentor every day via Microsoft Teams so she can train me on different aspects of the role. She also talks to me about what to expect with the apprenticeship, as she completed it last year. I have 4 weekly one to one meetings with my line manager, as well as informal chats most days about how I am getting on. Other members of the team will also check in with me via Skype for Business to see how I'm getting on and I know that if I have any problems or need more work to do they are always on hand to help me.

**What tips would you give to someone who's thinking of applying for an apprenticeship at Ipswich Borough Council?**

Don't be afraid to ask questions and make use of the support available to you.

**What is one thing you didn't know about Ipswich Borough Council before you joined?**

How popular the apprenticeship scheme is.