

## **CAREER EDUCATION – WRITTEN Q+A: Lawrence Morris**

### **1. What is your job role and organisation?**

Policy and Programme Manager, Cambridge Ahead

### **2. What do you do in this job?**

Working in policy you use findings from research and analysis to advise government, think tanks or businesses about best practice.

In my case I work for Cambridge Ahead, which exists to support, contribute to, and influence local and national decision making to make Cambridge a great city. We organise research and gather evidence about things like transport, housing, city planning and education. We then use this research to highlight the opportunities and needs of the region.

In my role I manage and oversee this programme of work. I also analyse these topics and think about how government policy or decision making at both the local and national level might be improved in order to ensure the city is as successful as possible in the future.

Cambridge Ahead is a membership organisation, made up of many large employers in the region. So it is important to make sure I am working closely with them to understand their priorities and points of view as I go about my work.

### **3. Why did you choose this career?**

I have always been passionate about doing a job where I feel I am making a positive difference in relation to real issues that affect everyone's lives. As I went through school I found myself interested in politics and the big issues which governments have to address. Working in policy you have to understand and develop appropriate responses to some of the most complex questions that we face as a country and society.

It's my job to think about how we help make housing more affordable in one of the least affordable cities in the country, how we ensure Cambridge continues to create jobs and opportunities for young people and how we make the right decisions to move toward Cambridge becoming a sustainable and net zero city in the future.

### **4. What background education or training do you have?**

I did A-Levels in English Literature, History and Politics – choosing these subjects based on what I would find most interesting and enjoyable.

I went to University and did a BSc in Government /Politics and later returned to University to study for an MSc in Public Policy.

### **5. What has your career path been?**

I left school in 2011 and went to University for 3 years. During my last year of University, I came across a management trainee graduate scheme run by the Local Government Association which I thought looked really interesting and aligned well with my degree. On the graduate scheme I joined Cambridgeshire County Council where I worked for around 3 years.

After working for few years, I decided to return to University to study for an MSc in Public Policy. Whilst I don't think this was essential for my chosen career path, I felt it greatly improved my knowledge and skill set and positioned me well when applying for jobs in the policy space.

I then worked for about 18 months in a role related to accelerating the delivery of affordable housing before moving to my current position at Cambridge Ahead.

## **6. What does a typical day involve?**

A typical day might involve:

- Meeting with Cambridge Ahead member organisations, either 1 to 1 or in a group setting to discuss a project or policy area.
- Conducting desk research and analysis around a particular topic.
- Drafting a policy briefing or consultation response.
- Checking in with team members and other organisations we are working with to ensure that a project is progressing smoothly and to schedule.

## **7. What is your work environment like?**

My job is office based. I work in a small immediate team of five people but with a wide network of individuals who are employees of Cambridge Ahead member organisations and other partners who we work regularly with.

My job allows for a good balance between time spent on my work, which I enjoy, and time spent outside of work with friends, family and playing sport which is my main hobby. There is a good amount of flexibility to my schedule without rigid start and finish times as long as I am delivering against the requirements of the job.

The working environment, size of the team and flexibility will vary notably across different policy roles depending on the organisation you are working for.

## **8. Can you give an example of a project or piece of work that you have been most proud of?**

I am passionate about the importance of a city providing housing for residents of all ages and income groups. This is key to supporting individuals health and happiness and ensuring we create a cohesive and productive city.

I am proud of the work we have done to demonstrate the housing affordability challenge which exists in Cambridge. Through research we have shown that almost half of households living in the Cambridge travel to work area on middle income earnings levels would struggle to live in the City itself. We've articulated the importance of housing growth keeping up with employment growth in the city region and providing a diversity of homes across different house types and tenures.

## **9. What aspects of your job are most challenging?**

Working in a policy role can be rewarding but also frustrating at times. Policy change can take months or even years to occur and is rarely sudden and absolute but rather gradual and

incremental. You have to enjoy the work you do, be resilient and understand that change doesn't always happen overnight.

**10. How do you hope your career will progress?**

As I progress in my Policy career, I hope that I will be able to move into positions of increasing leadership – being the primary individual responsible for setting the policy direction of the organisation I am working for.

There are a range of different organisations sectors that you can work for in a policy role, from local and central government, think tanks, charities, membership organisations and the private sector.