

# Life under lockdown as an apprentice

Jasmine shares her experience so far...

## Meet Jasmine

Hi, I'm Jasmine, a Housing Policy and Practice Degree Apprentice at Flagship Group. I rotate between departments throughout my apprenticeship to support the modules that I am currently studying; this provides me with an insight into which department I would like to join upon apprenticeship completion.

I currently work with the Housing Team at Victory Housing Trust, to support our customers experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19, and as a result are struggling to pay their rent. I can make agreements which are affordable to the customer and ensure they are receiving the support that they require.

## How has the lockdown affected you?

Naturally, I felt anxious. I did not know what this would mean for my apprenticeship, my work, and my personal life. I was also concerned for myself and my family's wellbeing. However, I instantly felt more at ease once Flagship Group announced that my role was secure, and I would be able to continue with my degree apprenticeship.

Flagship Group offers agile working, which allows me to have flexibility of where, when and how I work. This has enabled me to easily adapt to remote working, whilst still maintaining communication with our customers and providing support. My other household member is a key worker, so I spend most of my time home alone.

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At first, I was apprehensive of being by myself all day, but my dog Archie keeps me company. Thankfully I have my own home office which I can use – but I like to move locations depending on my workload each day, especially in the garden sun!



## Adjusting to new ways

Before COVID-19, I had just started a placement with Flagship Development – I was excited for this new opportunity. Unfortunately, this placement could not be facilitated remotely, so I re-joined the Housing Team due to my previous experience with them, to work as an Income Management Officer.

I was intrigued to be back working with this team and to learn new methods of working, especially as we are unable to conduct home visits. There have been lots of adaptations and developments in the Housing Team that I have had the opportunity to be involved in, such as welfare calls and digital sign ups.

I try to take a couple of hours each morning to focus on my University assignments and any other work associated with my apprenticeship. I have been able to maintain my 20% 'Off-The-Job' training by attending a variety of webinars from Amazing Apprenticeships and Chartered Institute of Housing. They are a great way to learn new information on a variety of topics, through a different method.

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Flagship Group are very supportive and are more than willing to allow me time to focus on my degree. This has helped me maintain the balance between my degree and my role at Flagship. My degree sessions are being delivered virtually. Initially, it was a big adjustment, but now I feel more comfortable with them – and it saves me several hours of driving!

One of the biggest adjustments of lockdown is the lack of social interaction. Usually, I would be in the office with my colleagues, utilising agile working by having ‘walk & talk’ meetings and going for lunch together. During lockdown, we have been maintaining our communication via Skype/Microsoft Teams through regular calls.

Alongside this, many initiatives have been introduced by Flagship to keep people in touch and engaged, such as coffee break meetings, quizzes and ‘lunch & learn’ sessions. It has enabled me to attend virtual sessions on a variety of themes, including neurodiversity, assertiveness, and autism awareness - which then become a topic of discussion on following calls.

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## In my spare time

I have challenged myself to start learning Level 1 British Sign Language; I have always been interested in learning and now is a great time to start!

With some of the extra time I have had at home, I have been able to take my dog on longer walks and explore new routes. I have found it peaceful to disconnect from work and my phone and take time to appreciate the nature around me.

I have also been learning how to ‘garden’. I am petrified of spiders and bugs (actually, all the creepy crawlies), so I have never been involved in the garden before. I am slowly learning, but I’m banned from using the hedge cutter and drill after we had a few minor injuries...I spend most of my spare time playing with my dog in the pool, and taking him on long walks to the beach and rivers!

It is important to take care of your mental health through this difficult time. This can range from practising mindfulness to encourage self-awareness of how you are feeling, to talking about your mental health with a friend or colleague. It has been a big adjustment not being able to see friends, family and colleagues on a regular basis, however living rural has allowed me to safely meet them for a socially distanced walk. I regularly contact my colleagues to check in on them – I find seeing my colleague’s pets (especially dogs) is a great mood booster!