

My experience of the Change 100 programme

Why did you apply for a Change 100 internship?

As a disabled person, I was encouraged by Change 100's emphasis on inclusivity and breaking down barriers to employment. This was essential to me; I wanted to learn how to advocate for myself in the workplace. In addition, I liked the programme's broad scope. It offered placements across a range of sectors and job types, unlike many other grad schemes. Lastly, I was keen to access its mentoring scheme and other self-development opportunities.

What did the application process involve and how did you find it?

The **first stage** of the application process was a written response to three skills-based questions. I answered these using the STARE method (Situation, Task, Action, Result, Evaluate). I submitted my answers in December, and in mid-January, I was invited to the second application stage.

The **second (and final) stage** was an online assessment centre. These took place in February. The assessment centre was made up of three parts:

- 1) **A 4-minute presentation delivered to several other candidates and an assessor.** Instructions were sent in advance. I was initially intimidated by this task – but the other candidates and assessor were all lovely, and it was a comfortable environment.
- 2) **A team problem-solving exercise with 2-3 other candidates.** This lasted around half an hour, and I quite enjoyed it! It didn't feel competitive.
- 3) **A 1-1 interview with two assessors (20-25 mins).** This was a great experience for me. The interviewers were very friendly and encouraging. Also, we were able to ask for adjustments in advance.

Overall, the assessment process was very positive. I felt relatively relaxed and comfortable the whole way through, and there were plenty of breaks built in.

I was contacted around a month after the assessment centre and notified of my place on the programme.

How were you matched with the organisation that offered your internship and where were you based?

I was asked to complete a placement preferences form with my details, location, ideal job types and prior experience. The Change 100 team used this information to match me with an employer.

I was offered a role at Macmillan Cancer Support in their editorial and cancer information department. This role was a perfect match for me – it combined my interest in social activism and the charity sector with my media and writing skills. Also, as I had expressed in my preferences form that I wasn't able to relocate and would be interested in hybrid/remote roles, my placement was home-based, with the option to travel down to the London office 1-2 times a month if desired. This proved a great balance for me!

What opportunities did the internship offer?

My internship has offered me so many valuable opportunities. To name a few:

- Learning a range of new skills and taking part in training. For example, how to create a newsletter, how to use Adobe InDesign, how to format audiobooks, and how to create accessible content. I now have lots of new skills to add to my CV!
- Growing my network. – I have loved getting to know my team, who are all super friendly and helpful. There's also been lots of opportunities to chat with people across the organisation and gain insight into their work.
- The chance to connect with other interns in my organisation and form a community. We had weekly half hour catch-ups and workshops every few weeks. Towards the end of our placements, we each presented a '5 minute update' about the work we were doing. This was really interesting and rewarding.

What was the best part of your internship?

A highlight for me was the chance to travel down to London for our big team meeting in September. This expanded my comfort zone, and was quite challenging – for example, I met a lot of new people in-person for the first time and had to navigate a new city. It was also a fantastic experience. I felt that my contributions to our team exercises were genuinely valued and that we were making a difference to our department's strategy. I also went for a meal with my team and for drinks after work, which was a lot of fun.

What support did you get from Change 100?

Change 100 facilitated a mentor for me at Macmillan, which has been a wonderful bonus. I've met with them every two weeks to discuss my progress, any difficulties, and general career/growth opportunities. They have been super approachable and helpful.

Further, the programme has hosted several workshops each month for the entire Change 100 cohort. These have been on everything from self-advocacy as a disabled employee to challenging perfectionism and employability skills.

Also through Change 100, I have obtained free access to a Google Certificate course on Project Management, as well as to a course on 'building a better network.' These have both enabled me to grow my skills alongside my internship.

Would you recommend an internship organised through Change 100 to other students and graduates?

I would absolutely recommend a Change 100 internship to any student or graduate. It has been a fantastic first step for me into the world of work and made me a lot more confident in my abilities as a disabled person. Compared to a lot of other grad schemes, the application process is also relatively quick and straightforward. They take a highly personalised approach in assessing you and matching you to the right opportunity if successful.

What is your next step after completing the internship?

I am thrilled to have been offered a three-month extension to my internship, taking me up to the end of December. I am currently considering applying for an internal vacancy at Macmillan once this comes to an end. I am also talking to my mentor about other job opportunities in the charity sector.

Would you have any tips for York students or graduates making an application to Change 100 in 2023?

1. The programme places a real emphasis upon self-reflection and development. So, I'd recommend thinking carefully about what you, personally, would like to get out of the experience, and how it can help you to build specific skills.

2. For the written application, it's a great idea to go through your answers and examples with a careers coach or advisor. They can highlight where you might be missing info and make sure you're meeting the 'required attributes' for the role. I found this really useful.
3. Make sure to be yourself and request any reasonable adjustments you might need for the assessment process. Change 100 are happy to provide these. For example, I asked for my interview questions to be sent an hour in advance to give me time to process them.