

Black South West Network Bristol Model Placement: RACE

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During my time with BSWN, I have had the opportunity to work on a new collaboration known as Research Action Coalition for Race Equality (RACE) alongside two other interns, Morayo and Lottie. My role has primarily been that of a data researcher, tasked with both researching and updating existing data by ethnicity in the South West of England. The data is vast and varies across a number of interesting topics such as health, housing, the criminal justice system and the economy, and has provided me with a remarkable insight into many of the racial disparities that exist in society.

As I began the placement, I was also finishing my Economics course. I was keen to learn how some of the skills and knowledge I had obtained during University could be of help in the workplace. I often found that while education can be interesting and cover challenging topics, it is sometimes difficult to understand how this knowledge can be used outside of academia. From the very first day with BSWN, the answer to this question made itself clear. I immediately understood how so much of the quantitative aspect of my university course could be used in everyday tasks in the workplace. The role therefore gave me confidence that I was ready to step out of education and take responsibility in a practical role.

My role at BSWN has also been an amazing opportunity to get a feel for what it is like to work within an organisation who are on the frontline in initiating positive societal change. I think being able to work for such a good cause has perhaps been the highlight of the placement. It meant that every day I sat down to work I was motivated at the thought of contributing to this task of achieving greater equality.

Although much of my work was independent, one aspect of the experience I found very helpful was the support and collaboration offered throughout the placement. Angelique and Saffron were constantly providing support and offering feedback and advice to the work I was doing. Also, every week all interns met with Angelique to have general catch ups, discuss our progress and highlight any problems we would need to overcome. The structure of these meetings were great, and provided a nice balance to independent working.

During my placement, I practiced and developed several new skills. Working with data so frequently improved both my research and Excel skills which I often found to be a challenging but rewarding process of learning by doing. During my time with BSWN, Angelique and Saffron also provided me with opportunities to extend my work outside of data, which often included blog writing. Some examples include writing a piece about the launch event of RACE and some other informative blogs about internationally recognised days of significance in the equality/justice sphere. I often found that researching and writing these blogs were a great break from working with data and allowed me to work outside of my comfort zone, again developing my skills in writing for public audiences.

The experience I had during my placement with BSWN is one in which I would recommend to any student or individual seeking work experience and an insight to working for positive change. My role has been rewarding throughout, as I have seen much of the research I have done coming together and many of the blogs being uploaded and shared to the website and social media pages. My experience also had a perfect balance of guidance, independent responsibility, personal development and excitement, which I think is a rare privilege that I am incredibly thankful for and would recommend to anyone wishing to make a similar transition into a workplace role.

