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Alumni profiles - Paul Fisher

Masters in Public Health (MPH), Part-time 2009

4th year student on the West Midlands Public Health Training Scheme

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How has your career developed since graduating from the University of Birmingham?

The year after graduating I left my old post at the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and successfully applied for the West Midlands Public Health Training Scheme. I am in my fourth year (I was able to skip the first year as I had my MPH) and next year I will leave the scheme and hopefully start work as a Consultant in Public Health at one of the local authorities in the West Midlands.

What is the best thing about the job you are doing now?

The best thing about the training scheme is the variety. Placements last around six months and cover all the elements of public health: health protection (at the HPA), health promotion (Solihull Primary Care Trust), healthcare public health (Midlands and East Specialised Commissioning Group) and academic public health (working on climate change at the University of Birmingham).

Why did you originally apply to do your chosen course at Birmingham?

I was lucky that my employer at the time (HPA) offered to fund the course and allowed me to study part-time. I jumped at the chance to study an MPH as it was a fantastic opportunity to broaden my knowledge of public health beyond the health protection issues I was involved in during my day-to-day work.

What did you think were the best points of the course and the University?

The MPH at the University of Birmingham has a good balance between the different elements of public health. It is taught in a variety of interesting formats by experts in the field and provides the student with a great deal of freedom in constructing the type of course that they want to study through the choice of a wide range of modules.

What advice would you give to current students studying on the course?

Like all courses the more you put in the more you will get out. Make sure you do the background reading suggested so that you can hit the ground running when modules start. Make sure you chose a subject you are passionate about for your dissertation topic as it will be a big part of your life for the coming months.

How did you grow as a person by studying at University? Did it change your life in any way?

Having done my previous masters degree (in ecotoxicology) via distance-learning it was a refreshing change to meet my fellow cohort of students face-to-face. The relationships formed are a key part of the non-academic benefits of studying for an MPH.

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