

British Pregnancy Advisory Service

In 2014, Birmingham Law School partnered with this national charity, in offering a four-week work experience placement to a student with a particular interest in issues relating to reproduction policy and the law.

Lucy Coe talks about her experience:

Over the past year my interest in charitable work in the women's sector has grown and when this placement was offered to University of Birmingham Law students I saw an opportunity to get some office experience, but more importantly some charitable work experience related to my specific area of interest.

I underwent some research into the British Pregnancy Advisory Service's policies, their press releases and their stance, finding their pro-choice and independent initiative to be a breath of fresh air, in consideration of the still secretive environment that the UK resides, in regard to pro-choice politics. As someone who fervently believes in the right of every individual to choose, and having just begun my bioethics module, I found the subject of the right to termination invigorating and highly interesting. It was a brilliant opportunity and considering my previous lack of experience in both an office and in the charity sector, particularly in regard to the women's sector, it was simply too good an opportunity to pass up.

During my placement I had one major project collating an extensive and detailed spreadsheet including information on prospective parliamentary candidates and current MPs, which involved a huge amount of critical analysis of polling reports and deductions based on personal characteristics of PPC's, who often had little information available about them. This was to aid with BPAS' move toward decriminalisation, but upon hearing that they were attempting to engage in European politics to push this through, I offered myself up to do another, smaller, research project for them, which entailed details about European and International political structures and pro-choice politics and the likelihood of BPAS achieving success on this scale. In addition to this I also engaged in a clinic visit to gain a better understanding of the main bulk of BPAS' work, helping out at a networking event and accompanying my manager to a talk in regard the European Parliament.

Along with gaining a better understanding of working in an office environment and additional administrative skills, I feel that I accomplished a lot both personally and professionally during my time with BPAS. Not only did I produce strong research based conclusions in regard to pro-choice politics on an international scale, which my manager and her team found incredibly helpful, but I also found that my own personal understanding of pro-choice politics was helpful in their discussions about decriminalisation.

Having this internship on my CV has already begun to open doors for me as it has given me that little bit of a boost that makes employers actually look at my CV. It has given me confidence and shown me that this is the right sector for me, offering a strong building block which I can hopefully develop and turn into a career one day.

If students are dedicated to using their degree to help others, to engage in pro-choice politics and to begin a career in the charity sector it is 100% worth doing.

BPAS (British Pregnancy Advisory Service) is a national reproductive health charity that sees 60,000 women a year with an unplanned pregnancy.

The BPAS advocacy team campaign on a range of issues related to women's decisions about pregnancy, contraception and childbirth and try to inject women's experiences into public discussion about their reproductive choices.

Over the last few years BPAS has seen an increase in interest in our campaigning work, partly because of our higher profile, but also as pro-choice politics and women's rights are increasingly debated among students.

We are keen to offer opportunities to engage with our work, especially to those who are interested in a policy, legal or advocacy role in this sector but limitations of time and capacity make this difficult to organise.

The way this scheme has developed is perfect for us and we are pleased to have been able to offer an internship this summer.

Abi Fitzgibbons, BPAS

