

Achieving Better Public Services - The Work of the Audit Commission

Mini studies

**Helen - project manager**

Helen is a project manager in the Audit Commission. Before working for the company, she was a recruitment consultant. She was firstly employed on a six-week contract but decided to stay because of the class of projects she was asked to work on. She feels that: *'It's been great having a chance to prove to myself that I can apply my skills to totally unknown territory and still deliver.'*

The first project I was given was in the knowledge and information directorate. I was asked to produce a series of best-practice guides for local authorities, based on facts gathered by our field staff. My brief was...brief! I was just told to "make it happen", but actually that's the way I like to work. I hired teams of consultants to conduct the research and produce the first drafts. I also convened panels of internal and external experts, and redrafted the guides ready for publication.' Helen has had job-related training and she has taken part in a development centre. This was a day of individual and group tests that gave her feedback on her strengths and weaknesses.

Arati - principal auditor

Arati studied law at the University of London. He joined the Audit Commission as a trainee auditor in the London region. He says that: *'From the outset I was given a lot of duties, which included linking with a wide range of public bodies. Being flexible was crucial; I worked with different team leaders and managers on many diverse aspects of audit. Aside from the audit of financial statements and government returns, we also take on reviews of clients on their legal, fraud prevention and corporate governance arrangements, and make recommendations accordingly. Within the course of four years I had undertaken work for a wide range of clients. This included three London boroughs, two health authorities, eight NHS Trusts and a police authority.'*

As a trainee I was funded to undertake my professional training through CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy). The support that trainee auditors get is excellent. I never had to worry about books and course materials, as they were sent straight out to me. Working and studying at the same time is hard, mainly during the summer when tight deadlines have to be met for health audits. However, the training programme is both challenging and first-rate. I qualified in June 2004 and was then promoted to principal auditor.'