

Critical Appraisal Report

Gabriella Jones- 2404975

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Introduction

This report aims to review and critically appraise the work experience carried out in Pembrokeshire County Councils (PPC) Place Regeneration Department, considering the entire internship process, reviewing objectives, creating recommendations, acting as an action plan (stage 6 Gibbs Reflective Cycle) and developing a Post Placement Review and Feedback form.

Critically appraising is important in decision making as it can help identify the most important factors and experiences throughout the placement, to distinguish if goals were met or personal development was challenged. Critically appraising can also help evaluate positives and negatives within the placement and scrutinise the experience to understand the success of the placement (Sami, 2023) (Almutairi et al., 2024).

Review of Objectives

Creating objectives is important as it outlines clear goals for a project or tasks making the situation feel more manageable and rewarding. Making objectives measurable can boost motivation within the task as completing an objective can act as a reward system, increasing the feeling of fulfilment and satisfaction. Objectives ensure that you are benefiting from a task or project (Price, 2025) (Sutton, 2024).

Objective 1

'I aim to build a professional network to help build resources, support and skills'

Throughout the placement my professional network, resources, support and skills have developed. I have built my written communication and ability to curate information from a range of sources, shown in producing press releases and text for their website.

I have built support and potential references to help my future career, provided by the Communities Coordinator who said she was willing to help me or provide me with anything that would be beneficial to me and my studies.

Carrying out company training has built my skills, especially when I was with the company. However, industry specific skills were not built as tasks were not very enlightening or hugely relevant to the department and their aims.

Although I did not share contacts, besides during the application, I networked with a lot of people, departments and other organisations in aims to get a foothold into the company if I decide it is a future pathway.

Objective 2

'I aim to build my confidence in professional settings, interviews and unfamiliar workplaces to support my future career'

This placement has exposed me to various settings I have not been in like the stakeholder meeting, professional video calls and formal coffee meet up. These were all unfamiliar prior to the placement but now my confidence has improved within these settings after being involved. If I had not had this opportunity I believe I would be more nervous in my future career when attending settings like these. I have also never been in or worked in an office but now I feel more comfortable to do so.

Objective 3

'To identify if this sector and industry is a potential future career path.'

I found the sector interesting but not the environment. I would work in the public sector within this department however, my work would have to involve site visits, remote working, face to face meeting as well as working in an office. I found it hard to sit at a desk all day and would benefit from having more hands-on work in my future career.

Identifying this has been really helpful to my personal development as I have always been unsure on what I would like to progress on in the future, and now I know I would have to work in a more active and engaging setting, department or company to work at my best.

Objective 4

'Enhance my skills and knowledge'

My skills and knowledge have been enhanced in multiple areas during this placement. I learnt how to structure a press release, how to use different systems like a website designer and online training systems, learnt how many different considerations there are to factor when planning an event or project, different types of grants and funding like UK Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF).

However, most of this learning was mostly watching or listening and lacked hands on learning and trialling.

Appraisal

When looking at the start of the internship process some improvements could have been made. It took a long time for organisations to reply, making the sourcing of a placement a very long process. I should have started emailing places sooner rather than email some, wait, get no reply, and then email more. Additionally, I could have sent more follow up emails to push organisations to revisit my query, or phone companies so I could get a reply there and then.

During my placement I felt welcome to the team, comfortable in my position and I was equipped with relevant resources such as a fob key, laptop and training to support my time with the company.

The tasks I was given were monotonous and not very industry specific. I was doing a lot of simple, if not the same tasks which became boring and did not help process my personal development. Although the tasks were not insightful the experience, environments, partnerships meeting and site visits were. Which help develop my confidence and interest in certain areas such as the community projects and funding where everyone in the county is considered.

A Gantt chart was developed to help measure my placement success, all tasks on the chart have been completed, however, not all within the deadline created such as; meeting the team, sending paperwork and applications. Again, this could have been avoided if I started the sourcing process sooner and more efficiently.

Reflecting on my skills audit, multiple skills have been improved as a result of the placement. I believe my effective networking has improved over the past few weeks as I have conversed with multiple departments, multiple levels of employees e.g. chief executive and managers, meetings with other organisations and people.

My 'critical understanding of connections between environment, social and economic factors' has also developed as these factors play a huge part and focus within the regeneration department and are considered through all areas of their work. As well as the community's projects I went to see where these factors are vital to incorporate otherwise these projects would not exist nor thrive. Increasing this skills as allowed me to understand that environmental, social and economic factors have a knock on effect with one on other and every action taken within the public sector should consider each of these factors.

Within the skills audit I said that 'I work well in cooperation with other'. This skill has been reconsidered following the placement due to me not working well with the management style within this role. The management style within this role was seen as autocratic, which did not consider everyone in the team and was centred around what the managers said. Although I still worked in cooperation, I do not think I could for a longer period of time as this style would not suit me.

As part of measuring success of the placement, I wanted to ask for feedback from the team on my time there, in order to identify where my strengths and weaknesses lie. The feedback received was very vague; they voiced that they were appreciative of the work I had carried out and thanked me for my time.

One limitation from this placement is that my hours in my part job time had to be reduced in order to open my availability for placement hours. This meant I lost out on shifts, therefore lowering my income which came as an inconvenience.

Recommendations

Recommendations following the placement have been made to enhance future work experience or placement opportunities, reevaluate where you could have supported weaknesses within the placement and again, act as self reflection and development.

The first recommendation for my personal development would be to advocate for myself more. Specially in the placement I did not speak up for what I wanted which left me with repetitive and unproductive tasks. By talking more and campaigning for my needs I could have been give more challenging work or looked at different areas of the department, which in return would have help develop other personal areas such as skill progression and identifying areas of interest. This also relates to being left with no work to do once I had finished tasks; if I spoke up, I could have been given additional tasks to make my time within the organisation more worthwhile.

Another recommendation would be to start the process early and phone organisations in hopes to gain a faster response. Starting the process later led to my stress levels increasing, my ghannt chart not being completed by deadlines and cramping assignment work. By planning out the process better and being more efficient I could have spread my placement hours out better instead of having them crammed into a few weeks would have given me more time to focus on my assignment work, personal live and be a more enjoyable process with less stress.

An additional recommendation would have been to request written feedback from my supervisor on my time within the company. Written feedback instead of verbal would have given the supervisor more time to create a detailed and organised report that I could evaluate and reflect on to improve my personal development, in turn supporting my future career.

My final recommendation would be to seek paid placement or placement with incentives/benefits in addition to the experience, to counteract the reduced number of hours in my part time job.

Post Placement Review and Feedback

As part of the critical appraisal and to a post placement review and feedback form has been developed (seen below), to contribute to the universities annual provision on student placement and act as another method of reflection and critical appraisal.

Name of organisation:	Pembrokeshire County Council
Name of student:	Gabriella Jones
What were the positive aspects?	

1. Experiencing real life work situations in order to build my confidence and gain experience. 2. Support from my tutor who sourced back up placement options and offered help with writing emails, recommendations and gave us time off to put in placement hours. 3. Networking with different departments to help identify which areas of work I was interested in 4. Being provided with necessary forms and documents to ensure all parts of the placement were consider and carried out appropriately			
Were there any problems?			
1. Waiting on organisations to response to emails 2. Reducing hours in my part time job to open availability for placement hours 3. Lack of productive tasks			
Do you have any recommendations for enhancement for the future?			
1. Start process early. 2. Try seeking paid placement to counteract reduced hours at part time job.			
For students only. Have your circumstances or needs changed since the placement and in anticipation of your return to the University? For example, have your reasonable adjustment needs changed?			
N/A			
For students only. In anticipation of your return to the University, do you need any extra guidance to support your return (e.g. academic writing or referencing refresher sessions)?			
N/A			
Signed:	<u>G. Jones</u>		
Name:	Gabriella Jones		
Position: (please tick one)	☐ Placement Provider/Workplace Supervisor ☒ Student ☐ Placement Tutor	Date:	01/05/2026

Conclusion

The placement overall has helped my personal development in different ways such as increasing confidence in professional settings, developing my skills and expertise, exposing me to new environments and helping me identify future career paths.

Although, there were still areas of weaknesses throughout the process, however, recommendations have been created to consider and implement in the future if I am to carry out more placements and support my ongoing personal development.

I will continue to review my skills audit to encourage continuous self-reflection and growth, in hand, supporting my lifelong career.

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