

Careers in Social Research: Insights from, and aspirations of, students attending the Careers Event hosted by SRA Scotland and University of Strathclyde

In February, SRA Scotland organised a Careers in Social Research event for undergraduate and postgraduate students from universities across Scotland. The event was hosted by the Careers Service at the University of Strathclyde and it has been held for a number of years following the positive feedback received from both students and careers advisers.

The event was chaired by Julie Carr (SRA Scotland Committee) and interesting talks on what it is like to work in social research in different sectors were provided by Jonathan Waite (Scottish Government), Lorraine Simpson (Blake Stevenson) and Dr Andy Aitchison (Edinburgh University). The presentations were followed by a lively Q&A panel discussion.

Here are the career backgrounds and job seeking experiences of five graduates who attended the event.



Naomi Reid

'Find work experience, network and specialise in something you love'. Following this event, I am completing an MSc in Social Research at the University of Edinburgh, having graduated from the University of St Andrews with a First-Class degree. My dream job is to be a qualitative researcher. To achieve this I have networked at careers presentations, secured an internship with 'Firefish', a qualitative research agency, and been a survey researcher for the Times. What next? After finishing my research-placement with the Children's Parliament, I hope to find work in London starting in October 2010.

Claire Williamson

I graduated from the University of Strathclyde in 2007 with a BA in French and Sociology. I've been working in retail management since then but am currently studying for the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market and Social Research (via distance learning) which I hope to complete in June. In the meantime I've submitted speculative applications and responded to advertised vacancies and, more recently, applied to undertake voluntary research on behalf of national charities to gain practical, relevant experience. My ideal role would be working for a social research consultancy or within a charity organisation.



Andrew Pringle

I graduated from Edinburgh University in 2007 with a BSc (Hons) in Psychology and I am currently studying for an MRes Research Methods at the University of Strathclyde. My experiences since have given me a taste of research across Scotland, London and Ghana and I would like to play a lead role in educational research at home and abroad.

During my current MRes, I attended a talk on social research by private, public and academic researchers as well as a number of University careers events. These have been great for picking up on interesting leads but I have found contacting researchers directly to be invaluable and they have always been extremely enthusiastic about helping out.



Evelyn Koon

I have a BA (Hons) Business Economics with Finance, MSc Economic Management and Policy. My dream job would be to do research within the social sector, especially with issues concerning the environment and local issues. I want to learn more about them, and to develop my analytical skills.

So far my job hunting efforts have included:

- Attending talks on working in private consultancies and in social research;
- Contacting people who work in social research;
- Gaining work experience to explore my interests;
- Applying online for internships and graduate jobs.



Kirsty Henderson

I have a MSc in African Studies from the University of Edinburgh, and my first degree was a BA (Hons) in Social Sciences – Joint Politics and Sociology from Glasgow Caledonian University. I am currently doing a MRes in Social Research at the University of Strathclyde. My work experience to date includes experience in the public and voluntary sector: employment with Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Trust in a partnership working role and employment with a charitable organisation in a support role.

Now I am looking to become a Social Researcher with a social enterprise or charitable organisation. To achieve this I have been exploring research positions and internships in both the public and private sector; examining required job criteria and appropriately strengthening my CV as well as attending networking opportunities and careers fairs.

Clearly these are challenging times for early career stage researchers keen to embark on a career in social science based research The SRA is looking at what could be done by itself and its members to help people enter and stay in social research.