

Meet the Apprentice

As a Regulatory Compliance Officer at Kingston and Sutton Shared Environment Services, Amy Algar undertook her apprenticeship during the disruptive days of the pandemic – but the experience has set her up for a rewarding career supporting businesses and consumers.

What initially sparked your interest in the Trading Standards profession?

I finished sixth form and considered going to university, but after seeing the amount of graduates struggling to secure jobs in their specialist field, I decided an apprenticeship was the way forward as it presented a clear route into a career.

I came across Trading Standards on the government apprenticeships website. I did some research and realised it fit in perfectly with my interest and background in law. I was unfamiliar with Trading Standards, which is why I often discuss with my teams ways to increase our profile so residents and businesses are aware of our service.

I have been working to engage with traders to ensure they have a positive view of us, and helping them to understand that we are beneficial to their business and can work alongside and support them.

What does the apprenticeship involve?

I was able to be part of a knowledgeable team and deal with real cases during my apprenticeship, which helped my understanding massively. I was able to see where the new skills I was learning fit into the job. I even took on my own Trading Standards project and wrote a report on it for part of my qualification portfolio.

Having a full-time job did not hinder my learning as I had a full study day once a week. I was grouped with a cohort of students and as well as having a tutor, I was supported by a 'coach' who went through mock exams with me and reviewed my progress.

Among the general public, do you think there's enough understanding of the work that Trading Standards does, and its role in keeping them safe?

No. This is why I have been working to bring awareness to the work we do. We often carry out presentations where we help residents stay protected from and be aware of scams, whilst explaining how we can help.

I have recently recorded a short video introducing myself and talking about how our service can be beneficial to businesses to be sent to traders who move into the borough to raise our profile.

How do you think Trading Standards can encourage more people to see it as a career option?

The profession's positive aspects need to be publicised more. Many people view Trading Standards as a strict regulatory body who take complaints and 'tell off' businesses – when in actual fact we need to emphasise that our services work alongside businesses to support them and offer advice and guidance.

Traders need to have the confidence to approach us with questions or concerns before the non-compliance happens.