



Case study

FROM SCHOOL TO STEM

“Even if you’ve never considered a career in fusion before, there are lots of different routes to get into it; not everyone working in fusion is an engineer or scientist! If it’s an area that interests you, it’s worth exploring some of the options to be involved in such a rewarding industry.”



DANNI CHADWICK

Assistant Project Manager in the Fusion Technology Division, based in the Fusion Technology Facility, Rotherham.

BACKGROUND

After graduating in 2013 with a BA in English Language and Linguistics, I found myself without a clear direction. Although I had enjoyed my studies, I wasn’t sure what path to take next. I pursued a short qualification in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, spent a year as an au pair in France, then returned to the UK and worked in call centers. It wasn’t until I came across an advert for teaching that I felt I’d found a meaningful direction.

CURRENT SITUATION

I thought I’d retire in teaching; that I was in my lifelong career. I spent two years as an English Teacher to finish my ITT (Initial Teacher Training) through Teach First, then moved into Primary teaching. I loved it. This, I thought, was it. However, the toll of COVID on my physical health (you catch a lot of bugs when you’re a Primary Teacher!) and the demands of teaching (especially expectations outside of the classroom) on my mental health meant that by the start of 2023, I realised I needed a new direction.

I saw a role with UKAEA as a Project Coordinator. Before my degree, I had considered pathways in Project Management, and saw this

as an opportunity to try out a direction I hadn’t taken. Although I had no direct experience in Project Coordination, my transferable skills from teaching and the school initiatives I had been involved in stood me in good stead and I made a start on a new career, in a new industry. Organising, planning, coordinating activities; so much of my teaching life came in useful in my new role. It felt like a big step, but an exhilarating one to take. I received more CPD in my first few months than I had in my entire teaching career, and was provided with access to training to hone my skills in my new direction.

IMPACT

Since joining, I’ve been promoted to Assistant Project Manager and have taken on several projects within the Fusion Technology Division of UKAEA. Having come from a teaching background, it’s important to me that my work serves society and has a positive impact. In my role, I support projects to ensure they are delivered on time, within budget and to UKAEA’s exceptional standards. Using my skills to support UKAEA’s mission and goals is incredibly exciting and fulfilling, and has given me an opportunity to contribute to an industry I’d never imagined being part of.