

Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



Work experience students find out just what life is really like for an MP

HAVE a confession to make: I'm going to cheat a bit with this week's column. I've handed it over to the five work experience students who have joined me and my team in Westminster and Chelmsford over the last few weeks. I'm so pleased to have been able to give these students a taster of what frontline politics is all about and how an MP's office operates.

The students each had to complete various tasks during the few days they were with us. This included writing a summary – for a newspaper article – of what they thought of the experience and what they had learned. Here are some extracts from what they wrote.

Joanie Cheek, The Boswells School:

At the beginning of the week, I was based in Westminster, where I was introduced to Marie's wonderful team and was kindly given the chance to tour Parliament and observe oral questions in the House of Commons. I also learned how Parliamentary questions are created in order to seek information, as well as how government departments accountable.

Additionally, I assisted Marie's staff in creating social media posts, which taught me how MPs use their digital platform to engage with their constituents. I was particularly surprised by how fast-paced life in Westminster is, and impressed by how both the staff and Marie manage to handle everything.

I also developed a new appreciation for just how much thought and precision goes into an MP's work, ranging from speeches to social media posts.

Later on in the week, I completed the rest of my work experience in Chelmsford. Here, I was able to see the important behind-the-scenes work done by the great office manager and caseworkers to support the MP as well as the residents of Chelmsford.

I also visited the city council and listened in on some customer service calls, which showed me just how much time and care is taken to assist individuals. I then had the opportunity to attend the Skills Festival at Writtle College, where I saw how Marie encourages events that



Five work experience students got a taste of life as a constituency MP when they visited the Houses of Parliament with Marie Goldman
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benefit the community. For example, this event gave younger students the chance to explore different career paths and future education options. Overall, I learned that politics is hardly even about debates in Parliament. It is about constant communication, teamwork and intense dedication.

Jackson Lonsdale, The Beaulieu Park School Sixth Form:

My week of work experience with Marie Goldman and her team has been fantastic! I received a personal tour of Parliament and spent an hour on both days in the House of Commons' viewing gallery, where I got to watch real-time questions and discussions in the House.

The experience gave me an in-depth, firsthand account of how a working day in Westminster might look.

After this, I spent the rest of the week based in the Chelmsford constituency office. On Thursday morning I was in Chelmsford Civic Centre where I spent time on the front desk on customer service, followed by an hour listening to calls from members of the constituency about any issues that they might have, and on

Friday I watched a BBC Essex radio broadcast where Marie was interviewed a year on from her election as MP before visiting the ARU Writtle university campus with Marie.

The week has been full of variety and different experiences and tasks which have kept me busy and interested.

I feel as though I have learnt a lot this week about the working world and the political sphere in which Marie and her team function and think that I have genuinely developed my communication skills within a team this week.

I have had a brief exposure to Marie's incredibly hectic and diverse schedule (I could not believe just how busy her diary is!) and I have taken in so much this week and been so busy that I am positively shattered – this is great as I know that I have been challenged and learnt a lot. So, thank you again to Marie and the whole team for such an amazing week – it is one that I will always remember!

Roxanna Massey, Moulsham High School:

With three days in Westminster, I have completed many insightful tasks such as drafting: written questions, a press release and a briefing from oral questions in the chamber, and attending drop-ins. I learnt more about communications work, and everything that goes on behind

the scenes for MPs to be able to fulfil all their responsibilities. Shadowing work in Chelmsford City Council for the morning included listening to calls, and learning about how the staff support people who come in for help. Working in the constituency office portrayed the intricate work and time spent on all constituency casework.

I have been most surprised by how much time and effort goes into prioritising events in Marie's diary, and how her small team manage such a vast workload.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on this placement, as I have gained a unique grasp on different jobs available in politics, and understood the immense dedication the staff in Marie Goldman's office put into helping constituents, whilst representing the Liberal Democrats in Westminster.

Emile Faucon, Moulsham High School:

My week of work experience with Marie Goldman MP has been incredibly valuable and rewarding, offering a real insight into the day-to-day responsibilities of a Member of Parliament.

From attending TV interviews to responding to constituents' emails behind the scenes, and joining parliamentary drop-ins on issues like organ donation, Universal Credit, and benefits schemes, I gained a

broad understanding of the role. I was struck by the sheer workload Marie and her small team manage – balancing parliamentary duties, local casework and meetings with authorities like Essex County Council regarding projects such as the Army and Navy junction.

The highlight of the week was visiting Parliament and witnessing first-hand how an MP navigates from the Chamber we see on TV to back-to-back meetings and media interviews. What surprised me most was how small Marie's team is, given the scale and importance of their work.

Kalista Frimpong, The Chelmsford County High School for Girls:

On my first day, which took place in Westminster, I was fortunate enough to receive a tour of the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the chapel. In the afternoon, I attended a session of oral questions focused on education.

It was inspiring to witness so many Members of Parliament advocating for special educational needs in schools, an issue that is often overlooked and not discussed as thoroughly as it should be.

On the second day, I met the hard-working team who operate behind the scenes. It was fascinating to observe how responsibilities are divided, with specific individuals managing casework and Marie's diary.

This experience highlighted the most challenging aspects of the job; it can be quite demanding, but the team's strength and resilience are evident.

Later that afternoon, I presented Marie with a summary of what I learned from the oral questions session. This opportunity helped me to develop my advocacy skills, which I am certain will be valuable in the future.

Day three offered a different perspective, as I drafted a policy response to a constituent, an essential aspect of the work.

Overall, this experience has been invaluable, and I am truly grateful to have been part of such a dedicated team. I would wholeheartedly recommend this opportunity to anyone, regardless of their career ambitions. It is, without a doubt, a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

I'm taking a bit of a break from this column in August. See you in September!

*Keep well.
Marie*

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Kalista Frimpong