



PHILIPPA DOUGLAS

Industry: Government

CURRENT ROLE

- Principal Air Quality Scientist, Environment Agency

EDUCATION & CAREER PATH

- **BSc Physical Geography with Chemistry**, Keele University (3 years)
- **PhD Assessing Exposure to Bioaerosols from Composting Facilities**, Cranfield University (4 years)
- **Research Associate (Postdoc)**, Small Area Health Statistics, Imperial College London (3 years)
- **Research Fellow**, National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College London (1.5 years)
- **Senior Environmental Public Health Scientist**, UK Health Security Agency (4 years)
- **Principal Air Quality Scientist**, Environment Agency (2 years and ongoing)

HOW HER PATH DIFFERED FROM EXPECTATIONS

- As a PhD student, I aspired to an academic career, believing it was the only way to teach and conduct research. Coming from a background with limited exposure to other options, I didn't realise the breadth of careers available. Over time, working with peers, building collaborations, and expanding my network showed me there are many rewarding opportunities outside academia. Working in public bodies has allowed me to do impactful research without the pressures of publishing quotas or constant grant applications. It's been a rewarding and eye-opening journey.

CAREER INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

- I am a proud public servant. My career allows me to conduct high-quality research that directly impacts society while maintaining a healthy work-life balance and managing my non-visible disability. It's not about chasing the next "shiny thing," but about understanding how innovations can improve future practices. Every piece of work we do is driven by real-world needs and has the potential to make a tangible difference. That sense of purpose and meaningful impact makes my career truly fulfilling.

FUTURE PLANS

- I currently see myself staying in the public sector. Compared to academia and some industries, it offers greater job security, flexible working, excellent leave entitlements, and strong pension benefits. Of course, challenges like bureaucracy and red tape are part of the role, but the positives outweigh them. That said, I remain open to new opportunities—never say never.

ADVICE FOR EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS (ECRS)

- ☒ Take and seek opportunities—you'll build skills and broaden your network.
- ☒ Embrace failure—it happens to everyone and is essential for growth.
- ☒ Be proactive—whether asking for help, advice, or negotiating terms, don't be afraid to speak up.