



Name: Cassa Townsend

Job title: Team Leader (East Rangers) –
Sheffield Parks & Countryside Ranger Service



Employer: Sheffield City Council, <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/out--about/parks-woodlands--countryside/ranger-service>

Starting your career

What attracted you to a career working in Sheffield's environment?

Being able to stay close to home - growing up in the Peak District and still having family close by meant that I wasn't prepared to move to the other end of the country for my career.

How did you find out about the career opportunities that were available?

The usual places - Countryside Jobs Service, Environment Post, reading jobs pages in local papers. Also word of mouth - talking to people already working in the industry - picking up the phone and asking!

How did you get your career started?

Part-time gardening work (as well as waitressing, cleaning, pot-washing and many other things!) to get the money in, then voluntary work (leading Working Holidays) with the National Trust, one day a week volunteering at an Environmental Education Centre in Hathersage (run by Nottinghamshire City Council) and then full-time volunteering with Sheffield City Council Rangers.

Your career path

How long have you been working in the industry?

Nearly ten years - my first part-time gardening job was in 1997, more voluntary work in 1998 and I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, already volunteering full time with the Sheffield Ranger Service in 1999, when ILM (Intermediate Labour Market) posts were being made available with a generous budget for training and development.

What jobs have you done and how did you progress?

After a twelve month ILM placement with the Sheffield Rangers, in December 2000 I landed a job as Community Support Worker for Sheffield Wildlife Trust working on environmental projects in the north area of Sheffield. I continued this until October 2002 when I became Community Learning Officer for the National Trust at Hardwick Hall near Chesterfield. I did this job for 3^{1/2} years and got more deeply involved in areas such as education, community access, heritage interpretation, event organisation and many other ways of involving people in nature conservation and the environment. Then in April 2006 I became Team Leader for the East Area Ranger Team based in Norfolk Heritage Park.

Training and skills

What qualifications did you achieve before entering your career?

BSc Hons degree 'Environmental Economics and Environmental Management' 1993-1996



What job-specific skills training and development have you undertaken since starting your career?

- NVQ Level2 'Environmental Management - Landscapes and Ecosystems'
- Practical skills/certificates - Strimmer/Brushcutter/Chipper machine.
- IOSH 'Managing Safely' Health and Safety for Managers (one week course)
- Several short courses from a variety of providers (BTCV, ETN, Losehill Hall) including 'Community and Environment', 'Environmental Education', 'Working with Volunteers' and Interpretation training.
- More recently, 'Time and Team Management'

What have you gained from your training and development?

Training has obviously given me the basics of what I need to know to do my job (eg Health and Safety and machinery training) but I also see training and development as a way of meeting others, sharing and being able to take time out of the 'day job' to consider and reflect on subjects that you sometimes don't stop to think about during your working hours - some of these subjects for me lately have included personal safety at work and time/team management.

Your working day

What is a typical day for you?

The usual office tasks early morning - catching up with emails, making calls and responding to queries. Then the real work can start - it might be out to one of the sites we are involved in managing with the team to undertake some practical work (repairs and maintenance, habitat management or some site monitoring and surveying). On regular days through the year we run a guided walk or a public event aimed at families - we do everything from kite making to practical conservation tasks with the public and a favourite with the kids is our grass sledging! As Team Leader I don't always get to join in the outdoor fun as I am required to meet regularly with other Council Officers or partnership agencies to develop links between projects working in the East Sheffield area. I am also currently involved in developing a 'Green and Open Spaces Strategy' for Sheffield, with Sheffield City Council officers working alongside representatives from many other organisations to develop a strategy for the future.

What takes up most of your time?

As a cross-service responsibility I manage the transport fleet for the Sheffield Ranger Service (22 vehicles) which takes up a fair amount of time - this includes negotiating hire contracts, keeping track of servicing, repairs and maintenance, and overseeing the budgets involved.

What is the best bit about your job?

The best days for me are the public events or guided walks where we are actively getting people involved in their local environment, or helping them discover a new greenspace, woodland or walk that they have never seen before. That is what the essence of the job is for me.

The future

What are your aspirations for your career?

Not sure - I seem to have been lucky enough to move several times into a new area of work that has been interesting, exciting and relevant at the time, so who knows where the career path will lead?



How would you like to develop your skills further in the future?

Forward planning is something we could all do better I think - I would like to get more involved in areas such as management planning and securing funds for continuing future work.

Who has been an inspiration or influence on your career?

Everyone I have met along my path, in their own way.

If you had to “sell” a career in Sheffield’s environment in one sentence, what would you say?

Come on and get involved - there is so much happening around and for Sheffield’s environment, join the buzz!