

Routes to Qualification

In this edition we talk legal apprentices Bobby Jo Doherty of Carpenters and Jordan Coulton of Weightmans about their route to qualifying as a solicitor

Bobby Jo Doherty
Paralegal Apprentice
Carpenters



My current role is a Level 3 CILEX Paralegal Apprentice in the Serious Injury team at Carpenters Group. This involves a variety of work which differs from general administration to assisting solicitors, liaising with clients, preparing court bundles and drafting letters of instruction for experts in different disciplines. I find my role is very rewarding in that I am always learning new and transferrable skills. My colleagues are very encouraging and provide me with me with opportunities which aid my learning and development as a Paralegal Apprentice. An example of this is my recent attendance to a liability trial.

I started in July 2019 upon completion of A Levels in Law, Psychology and Sociology. In August 2019, I received my results and secured a place at the University of Liverpool to study Law but had, by that point, already concluded the experience I was gaining through this apprenticeship was a key requirement for any successful legal career. My apprentice training began in September 2019.

Initially I had every intention to take the traditional route into a legal career, I considered apprenticeships as an alternative if I didn't meet the requirements for University. I quickly realised that not everyone legally qualified attended University and that I didn't need to either. I am now just over 7 months into my role and have had the chance to work alongside people of varied legal experience and, most importantly, with different routes into their careers. I believe that going to University and academical ability no longer secures you a job in the way it once did and experience is a much-desired skill. This route enables me to learn both from a curriculum and the professionals around me who there to offer their knowledge and expertise. This is a benefit of working in the everyday environment.

My training is delivered by BPP University through a virtual platform. I attend this training one day a week and work in the office the remaining four days. I am required to produce a portfolio alongside the training to demonstrate that I have the necessary legal experience. I must sit exams after each module

and the portfolio is assessed upon completion of the course.

I believe there are advantages and disadvantages to both routes. One of the main advantages to the apprentice route is the ability to learn and gain a respected qualification without having to worry about any debt. A disadvantage could be that time management can be difficult as you must maintain a high standard in both work and studies. The traditional university route entails summer holidays and the student experience whereas an apprenticeship is full time work with limited holidays as per most full-time roles. I personally believe this was the best route for me, it allows me to still feed my passion to learn and study whilst working and earning a competitive wage for my age.

After completing this course in 2021, I hope to secure a place on a Level 7 Solicitors Apprenticeship and continue to progress at Carpenters. I would like to be a legal assistant with a developed understanding of the processes in file handling and continue to study. In the next 10 years, I would ideally be a qualified solicitor within the personal injury sector and manage cases of my own.

Jordan Coulton
Legal Apprentice
Weightmans LLP



Being an apprentice has enabled me to gain a great deal of legal experience in 3 practice areas; Employment, Disease and Regulatory. When I first started the firm as an Apprentice, this was my first ever legal job and so the first 3 months were spent in the support team of Employment which allowed me to become comfortable with the firm's case management system. After this, I then transferred to the case handling team and was assisting qualified lawyers in the preparation of their cases in the Employment Tribunal.

After a year within the Employment team, I then transferred to Disease in which I was running my own caseload of pre-litigated Noise Induced Hearing Loss and Vibration White Finger/Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome claims. I quickly rose through the ranks within the Department and transferred to