

Pupillage diary: the first two weeks

One of the strange things about pupillage is that, after the intensity of the application process itself, there is typically a long wait before pupillage actually begins. In my case, I received an offer of a common law pupillage from Exchange in May 2022, as I was coming to the end of the GDL. Initially the offer was for pupillage commencing in March 2024, but chambers were kind enough to bring my start date forward to September 2023.

Whilst I was studying on the Bar Course, Exchange ensured they kept in touch and supported me as I prepared to start pupillage. I was very pleased, given my interest in public law, to be put in contact with Louis Browne KC. Over the Christmas period, Louis invited me to observe a judicial review of a coroner's decision regarding the scope of a high profile inquest. I also had an informal chat with one of the junior tenants in the common law team about what to expect when pupillage began.

After completing the Bar Course, I was lucky enough to have a few months "off". As we had recently moved house, I spent the summer months unpacking and decorating, as well as spending time with my five-year-old son. I was pleased to have this time to spend at home prior to pupillage, but by the time my son had returned to school I was, like most parents with young children, keen to get stuck back in to the world of work...

In the week preceding my "official" first day, I was introduced to my supervisor, Sara Sutherland. Sara kindly invited me to sit in on conferences with experts in several clinical negligence cases, as well as attending a training day chambers were running with a solicitors' firm. This provided a good opportunity to get a better idea of what to expect in pupillage before I officially arrived on my first day.

As for the first two weeks of pupillage itself, it has gone by in something of a blur. I have sat in on conferences with experts in a wide range of personal injury and clinical negligence cases. I have also observed a number of pre-inquest review hearings, including for inquests engaging Article 2. It has been fascinating to observe, in particular, how the

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evolving law in this area is playing out in practice in relation to deaths in clinical care settings.

The theme throughout my first two weeks, however, has been the warm welcome I have received from everyone in chambers and the thought which has gone in to tailoring my pupillage to suit my interests. As a former civil servant, I am interested in developing a public law practice but am also keen to get some exposure to other potentially complementary practice areas. Before I arrived, chambers had already organised opportunities for me to gain that wider experience by shadowing a number of other barristers.

I am excited about making the most of those learning opportunities which lie ahead. In future diary entries, I will do my best to give prospective pupils a better feel for what pupillage is really like, in particular as an older applicant coming to the Bar as a parent and as a career changer.