

A day in the life of a Commercial (Business and Property) Pupil: Part One

Basking in the rain of summer 2023, it dawned on me that the start of pupillage was, finally, approaching. I made three or four 'to do' lists in preparation – a habit that is serving me well in pupillage. Alongside my list of clothes to buy and household chores to complete, I had the added complication of organising what my one-year-old daughter would need for her new adventure at nursery.

To rewind slightly, I started studying the Graduate Diploma in Law part-time in 2019 as a mature student while I continued working in digital communications. I had my heart set on pursuing a career at the Bar. But I had so many doubts about whether I could do it – was it too late? Was I too old? Could I still have kids and make it work?

With the support and encouragement of my law tutors, and after meeting many barristers who were also parents through events and mini pupillages, I went for it. I began the Bar Practice Course full-time in 2021 and, a few months later, I was pregnant and applying for pupillage.

And here I am now.

A fellow pupil described the first few days of pupillage as having 'first day of school/year 7 vibes' and I agree with that feeling, except this time my clothes weren't too big. But any nerves I had when I arrived in Chambers on my first day were quickly allayed by such a warm welcome from everyone.

After meeting with my supervisors in the morning, I was off to court with one of the junior tenants for an application hearing in front of a district judge in Manchester. Before we went into court, the usher came to tell us the judge hadn't received the bundle – a potential disaster. Luckily, we had a copy with us and were able to send it in for the judge to read. Lesson one learned: always take a hard copy of the bundle or key documents to court.

This application was being made out of time – not only by a few weeks or months, but by a couple of years. It was useful to see how the barrister responded to the judge's queries

about why there was such a delay. He came prepared with instructions on a compromise to the relief sought, which opened the door to negotiations with the judge rather than a dismissal of the application. Lesson two: identify any weaknesses in your case and take instructions on how best to tackle them before you're in front of the judge.

The following week I shadowed another tenant on a trial where the opposing party appeared as a litigant in person. It was interesting to see how the barrister and the judge dealt with an unrepresented party. There was a delicate balance to strike between allowing enough time for the party to put their case and ensuring an efficient use of court time. At the start of the second day, the judge decided to add a third day. I'm hopeful I'll be able to attend to see how the case is decided.

Outside of court, my supervisors keep me busy with paper-based work. As a Business and Property barrister, drafting pleadings and preparing advices will always form part of your practice and this only grows as you become more senior. After an 18-month break from the law – 13 months of which I spent singing nursery rhymes – it's good to practise my legal research and drafting skills without the pressure of sending it to a client.

It is a privilege to be a pupil and to learn from such excellent barristers and clerks. Every day is different and you never quite know what you'll see next. What I do know already is that I have the support of a fantastic Chambers made up of people who want me to succeed.

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