

2021 vacation scheme – making a genuine contribution

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When I opened my laptop on the first Monday morning, my excitement leading up to the vacation scheme had mostly been replaced with nerves. Now nearing the end of my two weeks here, I am happy to report that my experience has been hugely positive. Every person I have spoken to, whether a partner, associate, or trainee, has been incredibly welcoming and supportive. Additionally, all the vac schemers were paired with a supervisor and a trainee buddy. My supervisor has shown a genuine interest in helping me gain as much insight as possible and has made me feel at ease asking any questions I may have.

For the duration of the vacation scheme, I was placed in the Public Law, Environment and Planning team, part of Browne Jacobson's Insurance and Public Risk department. I very quickly learned that the team undertakes a large breadth of work. While public law is the team's main focus, they work across a variety of sectors, including government, health, and education. For me, the broad nature of the team's work has been one of the best things about working with them, and I am grateful to have gained exposure to both contentious and non-contentious matters. On the advisory side, I have been involved in the team's work helping public bodies exercise their functions lawfully, and was even asked to draft a report for a local authority. This involved having to interpret complex primary and secondary legislation and guidance. I also had the opportunity to sit in on a conference with Counsel

in relation to a contentious planning matter. Afterwards, I was asked to write an article discussing the area of law deliberated in the conference.

One of the key things I will take away from working in this team is that, in addition to providing sound legal advice, part of a lawyer's job when working with public bodies is to help them use their limited funds in the most efficient way. As someone with an interest in public law and the public sector, this piece of insight has been invaluable.

Through a number of interactive presentations, we have also had chance to learn more about the type of work undertaken within the other departments at Browne Jacobson. These presentations were a great opportunity to network with associates and ask questions about areas of interest. I personally found it interesting to hear about the interplay between the public and private sectors, as one of the reasons I initially applied to Browne Jacobson was for its even split between public and private sector work. For example, I learned that public sector teams will often be involved in corporate transactions and conducting due diligence.

Throughout the two weeks, I have noticed my 'commercial awareness' increase significantly, but not just in relation to understanding Browne Jacobson's clients. My experience here has shown me that trainee solicitors play an important role in helping to increase a firm's profitability and that it is essential to understand how law firms operate as a business. On our first day, for example, the vac schemers were split into groups and played a game in which we had to successfully manage our own law firm. We saw how important it is for a firm to increase utilisation and be profitable, but also maintain a healthy cash-flow.

As my two weeks at Browne Jacobson come to an end, I feel so grateful to have had the opportunity to experience the firm's down to earth culture, get involved in high-quality work, and be treated as a genuine member of the team. Sitting in the Public Law, Environment, and Planning team I have seen that Browne Jacobson truly is at the forefront of society's biggest issues and I would advise any aspiring solicitor interested in making a contribution to society to apply for a vacation scheme at Browne Jacobson.

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