

The Solicitor Apprentice: exploring alternative routes into careers in law

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Hollie Ingram

This week we sat down with Hollie Ingram, one of Browne Jacobson's first solicitor apprentices, to hear about her experience so far. Hollie highlights the importance of alternative routes into law and choosing the right path for you.

Growing up, Hollie always knew she wanted to be a lawyer, but as she was finishing school, she realised going to university was not her path. "I didn't want to move and leave my family and friends behind. I was also concerned by the data on employment rates post-graduation – I worried about the risk of studying for three years, spending a huge amount of money to do so, and then potentially not getting the job I wanted at the end of it all," she explains.

Unsure of the best route ahead, Hollie took a year out to explore alternatives, and discovered solicitor apprenticeships. "I instantly knew the course would be a much better fit for me than going down the traditional route. Gaining practical experience while actually working in law and building relationships early on in my career really appealed."

As a member of Browne Jacobson's first intake of solicitor apprentices, Hollie is a passionate advocate for apprenticeships and [takes part in FAIRE](#) and other social mobility initiatives, speaking to students about how apprenticeships offer careers in law to people from different backgrounds and learning styles. "I really enjoy speaking to students and their parents about different routes into law, raising awareness of the options and challenging some of the stigma that there can be around apprenticeships. I think it's really powerful at an event when I'm sitting next to a trainee who has come through the traditional route, and it's clear we've had similar experiences during our time at the firm," she says.

For Hollie this outreach is a really rewarding thing to do. She believes it's important to speak not only to students, but their teachers and families too, who can have a massive influence on children's education. "I think it's so important to break down some of the stigma – the routes people choose should depend on the individual as a person and how they learn. Apprenticeships are broader opportunities than just fee-earning work – it's also about learning to network, to be commercially aware and appreciating the bigger picture. If you want to test different areas early in your career, apprenticeships are a great way to do that."

The apprenticeship is six years long and involves working in different legal teams in the business, while studying with the University of Law one-day a week, gaining a wide range of experience alongside technical knowledge, to build towards qualification. "The fact that seats are at least a year-long helps you build your portfolio and your confidence in that area. If they were shorter, I think there would be more pressure around having to learn everything faster while also studying on the side," Hollie says.

Hollie is so passionate about shaping the future of solicitor apprenticeships that she has been appointed as an ambassador and member of the [Solicitor Apprentice Strategy Sounding Board](#). The Board brings together law firms who offer these types of apprenticeships to ensure that representatives can learn from one another and follow best practice when it comes to offering this route into law across the UK. "I was delighted to be selected for the role, which will hopefully inspire others to consider the wide options open to them when joining the legal profession. I'm a firm believer that this route has helped me discover which areas of law I enjoy. I hope to be a strong advocate for how other firms can make the most of apprenticeship schemes that they offer to lawyers of the future, as we've been given a lot of support to voice our experiences and help shape the apprenticeships offered by Browne Jacobson."

Hollie started her first seat in Commercial Health in 2018. In her second year she moved to work in medical negligence and then commercial real estate, all within the Health team. Hollie has recently joined the Banking team for her fourth seat, and this breadth of experience has already proven valuable. “Before starting my apprenticeship, I was interested in criminal law, but now that I’ve built some experience, I know that’s not what I want to do. Had I gone to university, I would probably have focused on pursuing that, rather than exploring other areas that are actually a better fit for me,” she commented.

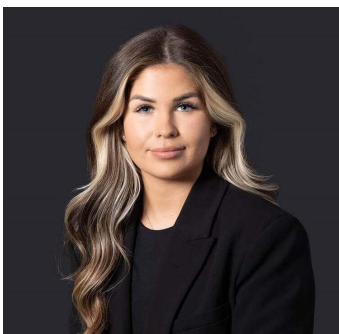
Despite being only four years into her apprenticeship, Hollie has already undertaken two secondments: with the NHS and a private hospital. “I’d always thought secondments were for more senior lawyers, so I admit in the beginning it was a bit daunting!” she laughs. Hollie spent six months in-house in the NHS and eight months at a private hospital. “Client relationships are so important, and it was incredible to be able to build these directly, and see the impact of the work we do in practice. I learnt so much from this experience, particularly from being able to see the full context and impact of a piece of work we might do, rather than seeing it in isolation,” she explains.

As part of the Banking team, Hollie is now getting involved in financial transactions. “Being brought in on the early stages of transactions is great – I get to see how things connect and to be involved from the start,” Hollie says. Her current work is focused on helping to draft agreements. “I’m being pushed early on and it’s been great in terms of exposure. Browne Jacobson is giving me a lot of responsibility and also a lot of support.”

Hollie is also a member of the firm’s social committee, where she collaborates with our REACH, Charity Action Group and ED&I communities to help raise awareness around issues important to our people and support office charities. “Last year we walked up Mount Snowdon and raised a lot of money for charity which the firm then matched. It’s brilliant to be involved in these events, help the wider community and bring people in the firm together after being apart for so long during the pandemic.”

Reflecting on her experience as an apprentice so far, with much more still to come, Hollie hopes that solicitor apprenticeships continue to go from strength to strength. She concludes: “I’m proud to be part Browne Jacobson which supports alternative paths into law and recognises that there isn’t just one route anymore. In the eyes of the firm we are not trainees, pupils and solicitor apprentices – we are all future lawyers.”

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