

A Career in Law

Traditionally the route to becoming a solicitor was to obtain a degree in Law, then an LPC (Legal Practice Course which is being phased out from September 2021) and finally a training contract with a law firm before you were fully qualified. The traditional route was time consuming and expensive with student loans. Also the traditional route of university does not suit everyone.

For budding solicitors there are alternative routes to achieve the desired qualification.

Whilst it is possible to obtain a law degree without going to university it can be quite daunting to start one without any prior knowledge of the legal industry and of course research techniques.

Where would you start your journey into qualifying if not going to university? You will need to obtain a role within a Solicitors or a firm where they have an inhouse solicitor already. Once there you can start your journey and qualify as a Paralegal. A popular route for a Paralegal qualification is through an apprenticeship scheme. By gaining this through an apprenticeship you are working (and earning) and gaining experience throughout the course. The paralegal apprenticeship is a government funded course and the employer will either pay into the apprenticeship levy (depending on their size) or make a 5% contribution towards the cost. Therefore the learner will pay nothing towards the cost of the course

From there on you can either take further advanced paralegal courses or move on to a Level 7 solicitor apprenticeship. Alternatively if you already have certain degrees, you may well be able to enter the graduate level 7 solicitor apprenticeship provided you are employed in a role in a firm where a solicitor is employed. Again the benefit is that you will have a wage coming in whilst learning and you will also gain valuable job training throughout the apprenticeship.

The Level 7 solicitor apprenticeship can be anywhere from 3 years to 6 years depending on the training provider and includes both the SQE (Solicitor Qualifying Exams) 1 & 2. Currently the level 7 apprenticeship is a funded apprenticeship with the firm paying either nothing or a 5% contribution to the cost. Again no cost to the learner.

Another route is via CILEX who offer various courses including diploma's, advanced diplomas and professional diplomas which result in a CILEX lawyer qualification and through this route you would have the same rights as a qualified solicitor. CILEX also offer apprenticeships. The main difference with CILEX however is that the learner would be responsible for funding the course.

Both the paralegal apprenticeship and the Level 7 solicitor apprenticeship are delivered online. It is however worth noting that there is currently a funding review on the Level 7 apprenticeships in general by the Government and a decision on whether all or some of the Level 7 apprenticeships may be cut from the funding levy. Level 7 solicitor apprenticeship providers are still currently taking on new learners until a decision has been made by the Government and whatever decision is made will not affect those already on a Level 7 apprenticeship. Whilst there has been no update about the Level 7 apprenticeship new pathways have been developed and a route to qualify has been developed around the advanced level 5 paralegal apprenticeship by one of the training providers who deliver legal apprenticeships. This route now offers the chance to go on to qualify via CILEX or SQE.

Having recently qualified as a paralegal it is achievable so do not be put off and explore the possibilities of achieving your dream.

Ann Storey, Paralegal at Alison Fielden & Co solicitors. Alison Fielden & Co can be contacted on 01285 653261.