

PALLANT

C H A M B E R S

A Pandemic Pupillage at Pallant

I was warned that the challenges of pupillage can be emotional for many and during my first six the whole country has been in tiers!

I started pupillage in September 2020 so all of my court experience to date has been remote. (Just to clarify, that does not translate to watching Suits or Law and Order all day.) Right from day one my supervisor and the clerks have been proactive in ensuring I would receive the best pupillage experience possible. We started with a four day fact-finding on allegations of sexual abuse, and it has continued to be just as interesting since then. I have attended court most days and have seen everything from emergency protection order hearings to a three week fact-finding about fabricated or induced illness. Through the many platforms available, I have been able to observe all of my supervisor's hearings and to join advocates' meetings and conferences with clients.

My tasks have included writing attendance notes, preparing draft orders, researching legal and practical issues, and many forms of case preparation. As time has passed, the standards expected from me have been appropriately increased so I have been challenged without being overwhelmed. One of the most helpful tools has been receiving feedback on work I have completed; everything is checked by my supervisor and either returned with edits or discussed, to allow me to improve for next time. This has been invaluable and seeing the improvements since my first few pieces has been both cringeworthy and incredibly encouraging.

I have had the opportunity to shadow several members of chambers, all of whom have been accommodating and approachable. Observing their different advocacy styles and receiving feedback from other barristers is helping me to develop my own approach to case preparation and my future practice. Receiving emails of advice and support from members of chambers has been an unexpected encouragement and I am sure that knowing there is always someone to ask for help will be even more reassuring in my second six than it is now.

One thing that I know sends shivers down all prospective pupils' spines is the advocacy exercise. If the rumours are to be believed, they include lots of late-night tears from the pupil and outright

bullying from the trainers. This has absolutely not been my experience. I have completed three so far and whilst they are daunting and they do push me out of my comfort zone, at Pallant they have been a positive tool to prepare me for practice. I confess that I have made embarrassing mistakes, but as my supervisor keeps reminding me, it is better to do so in front of her than a judge in my first week on my feet.

I have been very fortunate to be able to work from chambers since September, allowing me to meet the lovely clerks and have those all-important discussions with my supervisor throughout the day. However, even when circumstances have meant that I was working from home or shadowing a barrister who was, I have always been kept in the loop with constant communication both via email and regular video calls. This has been crucial because as a pupil it is difficult to engage effectively with a hearing if you do not know the important updates or issues discussed beforehand.

I think I speak for many pupils when I say that the majority of fear surrounding pupillage is actually fear of the unknown. That is why joining a set that prioritises communication is key - and my number one piece of advice to prospective pupils. As I have already stated, I receive regular feedback on my work, and we have had two formal reviews already so that I know what I am doing well and how I can improve. This has been a huge help to me in avoiding the chronic overthinking that so many people warned me about.

Hopefully, as lockdown eases, I will be able to spend time in a real courtroom, but the virtual ones are my training ground for now. Looking forward to my second six, I am concerned that I may get lost in court buildings or forget how to chat in real life, but I am certain that my pupillage experience has covered everything that I need to be confident and competent as I start on my feet.

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