Apprenticeships in the legal sector
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Foreword

The government is committed to delivering three million apprenticeships to encourage increased employer investment in training, enhance diversity and improve UK productivity. This is equivalent to more than one person starting an apprenticeship every minute of every day until 2020.

September 2016 saw the launch of the Trailblazer apprenticeships for solicitors, legal executives and paralegals. The Law Society supports alternative routes into the solicitor profession, as long as these meet the equivalent standards of the current routes to qualification. We also see apprenticeships as a way of increasing the diversity of the profession, helping meet the varying needs of our members’ clients through improved productivity and supporting wider professional development.

In the last 18 months, we have worked with our members and relevant stakeholders to develop our expertise and improve the level of support we can offer. This booklet is a part of this endeavour and we hope you will find it useful.

Paul Tennant
Chief Executive
The Law Society
Introduction

At the Law Society we believe that apprenticeship programmes give firms a unique opportunity to achieve a number of key business objectives. Designed around the needs of the employer, apprenticeship schemes can help to transform your business by bringing in fresh talent and encouraging the development of existing staff.

The range of legal apprenticeships now available will help you create a more diverse workforce and bring in new perspectives. Your firm’s commitment to these schemes will help increase access to the profession, whilst creating highly motivated and committed employees.

By embedding a learning culture within your organisation, apprenticeship programmes can also help existing employees develop their professional expertise in key disciplines such as finance, HR, IT and leadership.

Legal apprenticeships
From 2016, legal apprenticeships are being offered as an alternative to the traditional graduate route to qualification, and it is now possible to qualify as a solicitor, paralegal, probate technician or chartered legal executive by completing an apprenticeship.

Other professional apprenticeships
Apprenticeships in other professional disciplines can provide an opportunity for new talent as well as allowing existing employees to develop their skills within particular areas. There are apprenticeships available within many
business support areas, including administration, finance, HR and IT, all key components of building a successful firm.

Management and leadership development
Apprenticeships can be used as part of the continuing professional development of already qualified solicitors. Learning accessed through leadership and management apprenticeships can deepen apprentices’ skills and knowledge, whilst allowing them to receive external recognition for their quality of practice. There is a suite of apprenticeships for people at all levels of management, including a master’s degree.

Wales
Although apprenticeships are a devolved matter, Welsh apprenticeships have also been developed in collaboration with Welsh businesses. Employers can start an apprenticeship programme by expressing their interest online at SkillsGateway. The website contains a form enabling access to information and advice on setting up a scheme. In order to start an apprenticeship programme, employers must choose a training provider who will deliver the apprenticeship.

For more information on the benefits of legal apprenticeships, please visit our apprenticeship web pages: www.law society.org.uk/Support-services/Practice-management/Apprenticeships
In 2016, four new ‘Trailblazer apprenticeships’ were set up in England, replacing earlier legal apprenticeships. You can now qualify as a solicitor, paralegal, probate technician or chartered legal executive through apprenticeship schemes. All the schemes have been designed by employers, for employers – in order to meet the needs of the sector:

- The **Solicitor Apprenticeships** take 5 to 6 years to complete, after which candidates achieve Level 7 qualification. The solicitor apprenticeship standard is based on the Statement of Solicitor Competence and to complete the apprenticeship, an apprentice must pass a two-part Solicitors Qualifying Examination, set by the SRA.

- The **Paralegal Apprenticeship** is a 2-year scheme which ends in Level 3 qualification. The programme of learning is developed and agreed by the employer and the training provider.

- The Level 4 **Probate Technician Apprenticeship** will typically take 18 months to complete. In this role, candidates support the fee earning activities of a principal probate practitioner and their working brief is set by the supervisor.
An apprentice completing the Level 6 Chartered Legal Executive Apprenticeship will achieve the Level 3 and Level 6 CILEx Professional qualifications. The apprenticeship takes 5 years to complete and the end-point assessment is provided by CILEx.

We have worked with several employers already running successful apprenticeship programmes. The feedback we have received is that this qualification route ensures that solicitors meet the standards expected of any solicitor and helps integrate future solicitors into the firm at a very early stage in their career. Benefits to firms have been widespread and have generated a wide pool of committed staff.

For more information on the routes into the profession, please visit our apprenticeship web pages:
www.lawsociety.org.uk/law-careers/becoming-a-solicitor/qualifying-as-a-solicitor/apprenticeships
The firm’s perspective

What prompted you to take apprentices?
BLP has long recognised that the traditional route to qualifying as a lawyer, via a university education and training contract, is a costly and time-consuming process that discourages a lot of potential candidates from pursuing a career in law. We saw the apprenticeship programme as a way of attracting talent from different backgrounds and taking a new approach to how we develop our lawyers of the future.

How did you recruit your apprentices?
Time needs to be invested in attracting the right candidates. BLP has done this through a variety of routes:

- Working closely with its training provider to advertise its programme
- Visiting local schools to talk about the scheme
- Publicising the programme to students attending social mobility events
- Hosting open days for students to find out more about the programme

We have a rigorous assessment centre approach, not dissimilar to the approach we take with trainees, but tailored to reflect the different experiences of would-be apprentices.
How did you overcome any initial barriers?
Finding the right training provider is crucial. The relationship between apprentice, employer and training provider is key to ensuring that apprentices are given the support that they need.

What are the main benefits of taking on an apprentice?
We were initially cautious about how quickly we could expect them to develop but they have always settled in very quickly and been keen to impress.

“Our apprentices continue to surprise and impress us with their ability to adapt and grow into their roles.”

We hope that the commitment to the programme from both apprentices, BLP and the training provider will lead to a number of our lawyers of the future having qualified in this way.

What are your future plans for the scheme?
We currently have 10 legal apprentices and two solicitor apprentices. Each year we have increased the number of new apprentices we have taken on and we see no reason why this will change in the future.
The apprentice’s perspective

BLP apprentice – Megan Capper

I did a lot of research on alternatives to university and, as a result, learned about numerous different types of apprenticeships. I knew that a common struggle for law students was being able to gain work experience and this proved an obstacle when applying for legal jobs as graduates. By taking an apprenticeship, I would have at least two years legal experience under my belt and a greater understanding of the skills required to pursue a career in law.

The most useful source of information for me was the open day which BLP delivered during the application process. It was the opportunity to visit the office and listen to presentations about the apprenticeship. I was able to learn about the type of legal work BLP undertake and their values as a firm.

“This enabled me to gain a strong understanding of the role I was applying for prior to attending the assessment centre.”
I mainly deal with work within the Real Estate department, but I have also had exposure to work within the Real Estate Finance department. Throughout my apprenticeship, I have undertaken a wide variety of work streams which have involved drafting rent review memorandums, licenses, wayleaves, contracts for sale, leases and deeds of grant and release. I have also assisted with document reviews and dealt with a wide range of post completion work involving Land Registry and Companies House Forms.

“The most valuable skills I have developed during my apprenticeship have been time management, the ability to work under pressure, people skills, attention to detail and being able to present to an audience. Most of these skills I use daily and have been able to continue to develop and strengthen throughout the programme.”
The firm’s perspective

What prompted you to take apprentices?
Muckle LLP has had apprentices in other areas of the business for many years and has always supported this initiative. We felt that the introduction of solicitor apprenticeships could open the door to people who might be turned off the profession by high university fees. We knew the SRA and the Law Society were working on an alternative career path and we wanted to be at the forefront of that. We have also been encouraged by the success of the apprenticeships within the accountants’ profession and were eager to replicate this.

How did you recruit your apprentices?
Recruitment is an important part of the process and CILEx Law School has been really helpful in promoting this new opportunity across the North East. Like all the companies within the North East Solicitor Apprenticeship (NESA) programme, we followed up with local schools to ensure school leavers were aware of the scheme. We have also published details of this opportunity on our website and asked CILEx Law School and the national apprenticeship agency to do the same. Muckle LLP hosted an open day, with the other law firms also in attendance; over 50 students and their parents came along.

What are the main benefits of taking on an apprentice?
Through our apprenticeship route, aspiring solicitors gain the academic, technical and practical skills required to
become a lawyer and they can do this without paying any university fees. For us, taking on apprentices means we have fresh new talent joining the firm that we can coach, guide and develop.

“We have been encouraged by the calibre of candidates, their maturity and self-motivation.”

What advice do you have for firms considering taking apprentices?
For firms outside the region that are already considering this, our top tips would be:

- Identify suitable academic partners
- Speak to parents and students to understand their needs
- Encourage local law firms to work together to deliver the scheme

We would also advise being transparent about how demanding the apprenticeship is, so candidates are prepared, understand the work involved and have the qualities required for the role.

What are your future plans for the scheme?
We initially planned to recruit two solicitor apprentices, but the quality of candidates was so high that we took on three - all of whom have now started. We are definitely open to expanding the programme in the future.
The apprentice’s perspective

Muckle LLP apprentice – Ben Evans

Law had been a career interest of mine for the majority of my teenage years, based on the work of a family friend who is a solicitor and who would tell me stories of the more interesting cases he worked on.

As I grew up, I kept my interest in law and began to look at universities and for work experience opportunities - one of which involved shadowing a barrister for a day and going into court to watch the proceedings regarding a road traffic collision. This pushed me even further towards a career in law as I found the whole process fascinating - from seeing the amount of preparation, to the dialogue with the judge.

“My main source of information for further education and career opportunities was through my sixth form.”

I first heard about the NESA apprenticeship programme in an email from my head of sixth form, but researched it further myself.
The CILEx Law School website contained the most relevant information about how to apply, but the introduction sessions held at Muckle were also very informative.

The only obstacle I experienced was the time management of attending interviews and assessment days at different firms in the build-up to exams. However, the earlier in the year that these could be held, the less problematic it was. However, it was not a major problem and my experience as a Muckle LLP apprentice solicitor has been fantastic so far.

You can find more reflections from firms and apprentices on our website: www.lawsociety.org.uk/law-careers/becoming-a-solicitor/qualifying-as-a-solicitor/apprenticeship-stories
Steps when taking on an apprentice

1. PLAN
Determine how many apprentices you will need, and at what level, to meet the future demands of the business.

Estimate how much funding you will receive and ensure you have the resources to support the number of apprentices you need.

Select and train mentors within the organisation: organisational buy-in is critical.

2. REGISTER
Register your interest in employing an apprentice with the National Apprenticeship Service (https://sfacontactforms.azurewebsites.net/employer-enquiry).

3. FIND
Choose a training organisation that offers appropriate apprenticeships – they will handle your apprentice’s training, qualification and assessment.

Things to consider:
- It might be a good idea to run apprenticeship recruitment alongside the university recruitment cycle, to target school leavers. Think about how you will engage with parents and schools.
Check if you’re eligible for a grant and apply (https://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice/employer-grants-apprentices). If you are a levy-paying employer, register for an employer account and forecast future funding. Further guidance on how to do this will be published on the www.gov.uk website.

You can do this yourself, or your training organisation could do this for you through the find an apprenticeship service (https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch).

Select your apprentice(s) and make an apprenticeship agreement with them (https://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice/apprenticeship-agreement).

Make an apprenticeship contract with your training provider (using levy funds if applicable).

- Spend time planning how the apprentices will be integrated, and who will be responsible for supporting, line-managing and mentoring them.

For more information, visit: https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships
Funding

England

Since May 2017, any employer with a pay bill of more than £3 million will contribute 0.5% of that pay bill, as a levy, towards the funding of apprenticeships. Once they have declared the levy to HM Revenue and Customs, employers will be able to access funding for apprenticeships through a digital account. The funding available to an employer in England will depend on what proportion of their pay bill is paid to employees living in England.

Employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy will pay 5% of the cost of training their apprentices and the government will pay 95%. The training provider will invoice the employer directly. All employers will need to meet any costs above the funding band limit for any particular apprenticeship. Government and digital account funding, including levy contributions, can only be spent on training, education and assessment, including the end point assessment and is not to be used for wages or incidental costs, such as travel.

Alongside the apprenticeship levy, each apprenticeship standard is associated with one of 15 funding bands, with upper limits ranging from £1,500 to £27,000 for the duration of the course.

These upper limits represent the maximum amount that:

(a) the government will contribute, or

(b) that employers can take back out of their levy fund for the delivery of the training and assessment for an individual apprenticeship.
Use the **funding calculator** to estimate your apprenticeship levy spend, how much funding your organisation will have available to spend on apprenticeships and how much the government will contribute towards the cost of training: [www.estimate-my-apprenticeship-funding.sfa.bis.gov.uk](http://www.estimate-my-apprenticeship-funding.sfa.bis.gov.uk)

To find out more about the apprenticeships levy and how it works, please visit our website and watch our free webinar - ‘Law Talk: Apprenticeships levy - making the most of the levy for City firms’: [www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/apprenticeships](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/apprenticeships)

**Wales**

The Welsh Government will continue to deliver its Apprenticeship Programme via the Welsh apprenticeship provider network. There are no plans to operate a voucher system as in England.

Welsh Government is in the process of bringing forward new policy that will support the needs of employers in priority areas across Wales, regardless of their levy status.

Employers can also access the Apprenticeship Employer Incentive Programme which provides support for SMEs to recruit apprentices aged 16-19 and helps to provide individuals and employers with the skills needed over the long-term and prevent skills shortages.

For more information, please visit [apprenticeship pages](http://www.businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/apprenticeship-levy) of the Welsh Government website at:
For more information and resources about apprenticeships in the legal sector please visit our website: www.lawsociety.org.uk

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