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Why become a legal aid lawyer?

- Because protecting human rights and the rule of law is crucial to maintaining a democracy.
- Because preserving access to justice is a lifelong passion, a fire that never goes out.
- Because no job is more fulfilling – you may save one life at a time or hundreds!
- Because on a day like today, where the axis of world politics shifts, we need a new generation to join the justice guardians.

Does education matter?

- Its an essential building block to qualification but in 2017 its more about how than where.
- Can you make it easy for yourself with an LLB?
- If you don't make a 2.1 or 1st don't panic explain why – did you work? Family commitments etc.
- Gap years – may sound relevant but rarely help, if you can take time out without studying or earning money look to gain experience in the UK, within a relevant organisation.
- Consider a part time LPC or BPTC and work your way through. Many firms support this route.
- Choose a course with relevant modules for your aspirations as under or post grad it really sets you apart.

The holy grail of work experience

- Don't work for free as an unpaid intern, no one should expect you to.
- Any triage or gateway assessor role in a not for profit is ideal, completing legal aid applications and seeing client's is what we look for.
- Find a university that offers placements in established charities or not for profits.
- If you volunteer at your uni advice center, keep an anonymized record of the cases you advice on and results.
- Train for FRU where you build your practical analysis and client care skills.

Who to apply to and when

- Narrow your field to firms you have researched who you really want to work for, firms whose ethos you respect.
- Ask lecturers and barristers/solicitors if you know any for recommendations.
- Be true to yourself if you have chosen an area of law, find a firm that specializes in that area with at least one other area if possible which compliments the work.
- Many firms recruit for a September intake as trainee's move up from paralegals or trainees qualify. Check blogs like Nearly Legal, Lime Legal, LAG and YLAL websites.
- Direct applications are more attractive in response to job adverts than ones via agencies without agency fees. Legal aid firms can pay applicants more if they pay agencies less!

How to apply

- Its better to draft one fantastic application than 20 mediocre ones you make fit. We can tell the difference!
- Check whether a CV is relevant to the application process at your chosen firm, we don't use them at TVE, we want to test applicants in ways a CV can't.
- Tell us in the “more about you” section how you fulfil the person specification. Include what you gained from experience, who influenced you in choosing a career in legal aid, why you are the right person for the job, you need to demonstrate your commitment to be shortlisted.

How to prepare for interview

- Most firms will want to know what you know about them and the job your applying for. Get as much background as possible- websites are shop windows.
- It would be unusual not to be asked to complete a case study in the relevant area of law.
- Review key legislation from your training if you can and remember its analysis that is key. At interview take your time and treat it like you would an exam reading any question several times, your likely to be given essential guidance.

How to prepare for interview

Some of what you'll be judged on:

- ❖ **How well you complete the application form**
- ❖ **How well you answer your case study**
- ❖ **Your commitment to legal aid**
- ❖ **Your experience**
- ❖ **Your presentation**

How to prepare for interview

- Research what's happening in the market and at case law level. If you don't already read LAG updates go back 12 months in the relevant update field.
- Other useful resources which are free – blogs and news streams - Lime Legal and Nearly Legal. Most chambers also provide email updates on cases.
- Prepare like you would for an exam, you have had enough practice at those! Choose which new legislation or precedent cases you will talk about if asked, if not asked ask the interviewer.

How to leave a lasting impression

- Choose questions to ask you are not likely to be asked or information you are not likely to be told in the interview. Questions about the team may be useful but you may be told.
- Go one step further, find precedent cases that firm was instructed on and ask if possible questions about how those cases impact on their case work.
- If you are involved in any voluntary advice work, consider asking the team how statutory changes are impacting on their case work and practice and bring that knowledge with you to the interview.



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