

# Solicitor apprenticeship: 5 years, 4 months and 26 days to go

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## Leonie Armand

Our journey as apprentices began long before we set foot in Wigmore Place. For one of us, this journey was quite literal; moving across the country from Stafford to London to start a new life as a solicitor apprentice, leaving behind friends and family for an incredible opportunity.

Anticipation ran high all summer. Having never worked in a law firm before we all had our preconceptions - largely based on the various American court room dramas we'd been glued to since leaving school.

It was a daunting prospect, to throw away our school books and make the switch to suits and heavy legal tomes. We felt excitement. The excitement of beginning a new career; of becoming one step closer to our dream job; and of starting university and making new friends.

The apprenticeship presents an energising new challenge for us all and balancing working full time, studying for a degree and seeing friends and family means our organisational skills are now off the scale.

## Jamie Baker

The past six months have taught me more than the past eighteen years! Strangely, one example being how to make pasta and the other, how to make a disclosure bundle.

My anxieties of six months ago, were a complete waste of time. Six months ago, I would not have believed myself capable of doing what I am doing now. But that's the funny thing about the apprenticeship, especially with the support of RIAA Barker Gillette, you are pushed close enough to see your potential and then you're given the opportunity to achieve it.

This is never clearer than when I visit friends from home who have left for University. Their achievements and failures are not mine, and neither is the sense of satisfaction they gain from their work. I have found that I work for far more now than just a grade, and by that I don't just mean the rent! Just how rewarding having an impact on something beyond yourself would be I could have never imagined.

At school I often felt as if every exam and assignment was another hoop to jump through, inching me closer to a destination I didn't know the name of. With the apprenticeship this is never the case. My work always counts towards making a difference, even if only a small one. I could have never predicted the immense satisfaction and pride this would give me.

It would be nice to think that intelligence and a good typing speed are still mightier than the sword – at RIAA Barker Gillette, you can believe it.

## Patrick Simpson

Having run my own business for several years, returning to employment, in the more traditional sense of the word, has been a big change for me and my family.

There have been some trying obstacles to overcome and some occasions when staying late at the office has been necessary. However, this is certainly not the norm and much to my children's delight I have been home in time for tea most nights, allowing me to fulfil the fatherly role of 'borrowing' their food – especially pudding!

The amount of time needed to study shocked us all, especially me, considering how long ago I left formal education. However, I have overcome this hurdle (for now) by making small tweaks to my routine. I've put my

text books on my iPad, so that my commute no longer feels wasted. Like a timelord, I've stretched the hours in the day by sneaking in an hour or so of studying after the children have gone to bed, a few hours at the weekend and a whole day of studying thanks to the study leave given to us by RIAA Barker Gillette.

Six years can feel like a long time, but what sets my mind at ease when thinking about the future, is the level of support we receive at RIAA Barker Gillette, much of which comes from the close working relationship we have with our mentors. My mentor, [Laura St. Gallay](#), has been with me from the start, and we now work closely together in the [dispute resolution](#) department. It was Laura who interviewed me, showed me around on my first day, got me settled in and has mentored me ever since. She has made working alongside learning a rewarding experience.

As a member of the [dispute resolution](#) team, I have been exposed to a variety of civil and criminal cases. They're fast paced, and it's an exciting role that I'm enjoying.

What an opportunity, to get paid to go to University whilst at the same time qualify as a solicitor and training at a top West End firm.

Six months in we are all very pleased and look forward to our future at RIAA Barker Gillette.

Note: This is not legal advice; it is intended to provide information of general interest about current legal issues.

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