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VIRTUAL PUPILLAGE EVENING

Chambers welcomed over 130 attendees interested in a career at the Bar to our virtual pupillage evening on 16th November 2022. Our panel described the 7BR pupillage application process, life as a 7BR pupil and barrister, and the advantages of experiencing different practice areas in pupillage.

Hosts



Rose Harvey-Sullivan
Family and civil barrister



Christianah Babajide
Marketing and Events Executive

Panelists



Adam Weitzman KC
Deputy Head of Chambers, Head of the Pupillage Committee and civil barrister



Anita Guha
Family law barrister



Gareth Weetman
Criminal and civil barrister



Craig Carr
Civil barrister



Harry Smith
Senior Practice Manager, Family Law



Kat Shields
Junior Barrister



Rahul Kumar
Junior barrister



Jasmine Leng
Junior barrister

PANEL DISCUSSION

Between them, the panel have been involved in reading pupillage application forms, conducting pupillage interviews and/or supervising pupils in chambers over the years, with many also having personal experience of a 7BR pupillage.

Adam welcomed attendees, introduced 7BR and described 7BR's pupillage programme.

7BR is a multi-disciplinary set of Chambers and offers a varied and interesting training, with plenty of court advocacy, legal analysis and opportunity for working with others. Pupils develop the core skills necessary for a career at the Bar, and benefit from the wide range of work available in chambers.

Pupillage applications are anonymised and University names are removed when selecting for interview. 7BR looks for strong academic achievement, life experience and the ability to empathise. Work experience, which may include mini-pupillages, pro bono and/or paid work, is desirable. 7BR readily appreciates that unpaid work experience is not an option for everyone.

Chambers selects 60 candidates for the first-round interview and 12 candidates for the final interview. There is a legal problem both within the initial paper application and for the first-round interview. Candidates should research this thoroughly. Your legal analysis and the ability to argue will be tested in interview.

7BR pupils sit with a civil barrister in their first four months, and then criminal barristers during the next four months, when they will begin to appear in courts across the country. In the last 4 months, we will endeavour to find a pupil supervisor in a practice area chosen by the pupil.

In selecting pupils for tenancy we make a decision solely on merit, the availability of work is not a factor.

Civil barrister Craig Carr described how he works with pupils.

Craig Carr is a civil practitioner, specialising in clinical negligence, personal injury, professional negligence, and public authority liability. He is instructed in complex high value claims and frequently in large multi-party actions.

Craig has supervised pupils for six years. Pupils are with him every day, attending conferences and hearings, drafting and engaging in two-way feedback. In response to a question from the

audience, Craig stated that no prior medical knowledge is required: understanding clinical evidence is achieved by studying expert evidence, desk research, seminars and very helpful chambers WhatsApp groups. 7BR Pupils enjoy a friendly and supportive atmosphere within Chambers. Questions are quickly answered, and there are no attempts to catch people out.

Gareth Weetman and Kat Shields explained how 7BR barristers benefit from varied cases early on in their careers.

Gareth described the benefits of 7BR's multi-disciplinary pupillage, and his own wide-ranging practice in serious and complex criminal and personal injury cases. Gareth benefits from the approach of 7BR practice managers, who support members' career interests and focus on their transferable strengths.

Kat described the opportunities she has enjoyed as a predominantly criminal practitioner with 7BR. She was on her feet in crown courts all across the country during pupillage, working on big cases with experienced practitioners early on in her career, earning well as a result. Moreover, Kat welcomes variety, and enjoys her work in personal injury and employment law.

Anita Guha and Harry Smith described the 25-strong Family Team at 7BR and the varied, interesting and international work they enjoy.

Anita focuses predominantly on child law, covering a wide range of cases from care disputes and child cruelty to work with international treaties, stranded spouses and honour killings. Anita described the benefits of having a broad common-law mindset and her background in immigration law. When compared to her earlier work with a large specialist set, Anita's work is now broader, more complex, more varied and also more London-based.

Harry shared that working at a multi-disciplinary set has enabled him to learn about the demands of different practice areas, and how to integrate varied diaries. He also highlighted that family briefs often arrive with more notice than criminal briefs, which assists in planning.

Both Anita and Rose highly value the flexibility of a career within a multi-disciplinary set. Rose spoke of how she had been able to follow her interests at 7BR, cultivating her practice in the Court of Protection.

Having completed a 7BR pupillage very recently, Jasmine shared her perspective on the process.

Jasmine shadowed civil barristers during the first four months of her pupillage, focusing mostly on clinical negligence. She was set written work and given feedback, attended conferences with clients and medical experts and learnt about medical treatment and care. This was followed by four months in 7BR's criminal practice, including plenty of travel across both the South East and Midlands circuits. After receiving her practising certificate in April, Jasmine was on her feet in both the Crown and the Magistrates Courts straight away, as well as the County and Family Courts.

Jasmine spent the final four months of her pupillage with family law barristers. She enjoyed varied work in courts almost every day, in criminal hearings and trials, civil paperwork, family hearings and inquests. She continued to receive feedback on written and oral advocacy exercises, developing her skills as an advocate and learning how to manage a busy diary.

Jasmine mixes civil, crime and family work, and considers that she has benefitted from the transfer of skills she has developed between different practice areas.

Rahul came to the bar later in life, looking for new challenges after a career as a commercial solicitor.

Rahul came to the Bar looking for new challenges after a previous career as a commercial solicitor.

Rahul completed pupillage at 7BR and joined Chambers as a tenant in October 2021. He is currently enjoying a mixed practice across Chambers' core areas. He encourages other applicants with previous careers (legal or otherwise) to apply. Pupillage is a tough year, but Rahul is very grateful for the strong support he received from 7BR colleagues. Rahul is typically in Court three to four times a week and feels that the large amount of court work he has undertaken since the start of his second six has helped him to grow in confidence and refine his advocacy skills. Rahul enjoys the enormous variety that comes with a mixed practice at 7BR.

Q&A

It was confirmed that 7BR has welcomed pupils pursuing the Bar as a second or later career.

Adam and Rose highlighted chamber's competitive parental leave policies, designed to facilitate and retain parents at the Bar and in chambers at 7BR.

In general, pupils and newer tenants benefit from travelling widely in England and experiencing a breadth of cases. However, some barristers can and do choose to develop a practice closer to home.

A question was also asked about how chambers accommodates disabled applicants. Further to the 2019 refurbishment, Chambers is now fully accessible to wheelchair users; stair lifts, vertical lifts and a sesame step within our Georgian front entrance have all been installed. Adaptations can be made to interviews (and later, to practice diaries) to meet individual needs.

What do panel members look for in applications?

- Make your application evidence-based: do not use lots of superlatives, but instead demonstrate that you have the particular skills needed to do the job.
- Don't try to be the 'typical pupillage candidate,' whatever you think that looks like; think about what you have actually done, and the experiences you've had that will make you a good barrister. Focus on your qualifications and credentials, using a little life experience to give flavour (within reason).
- Any application should focus on quality over quantity.
- Keep your application succinct and punchy.
- Do your research on every set you apply for; tailor each application, as much as you can, to the specific chambers to which you are applying.
- Answer the question that is actually being asked (never copy and paste your answers).
- Review 7BR's pupillage application mark scheme available on the website; use this to inform your answers.