**Pupillage: From the Class to Court**

The topic of pupillage can be exciting, daunting, devastating and rewarding. It is the product of at least 4 years long, hard study and work - in most cases, much longer. Whilst pupillage forms part of the bar training process, it carries a different role in that journey as opposed to the vocational course.

A common law pupillage spans across civil, family, and criminal cases and during first six, I found myself observing range from cases involving trusts law, to the most serious criminal trials. Whilst the vocational component of bar training is structured and follows in a sequence, the first six of pupillage is like a jigsaw. You will get to see all these different experiences, but you need to make sure you structure your learning so that you get the correct picture at the end.

A career at the bar, as most aspiring barristers will be aware, does not come easy. Work can land into your diary at last minute, you may not be instructed at the start of proceedings, and you may often find yourself parachuting into the middle of a very large case; that is the nature of the job. Recently, I have been observing adoption proceedings in the family courts. Adoption proceedings happen right at the end of the family court process so naturally, I found myself asking lots of questions; how did this case get to this point?

The following day, I was observing a final hearing in a different case which ended with the beginning of adoption proceedings. You will see everything during pupillage, but the nature of the job means that it may not be in the order you will be used to from the Bar Course. It is about how you use those experiences and craft your knowledge of the process from start to finish. With time, your experience develops, and you know exactly where you stand with a case, just like the jigsaw eventually shows the bigger picture.

I am now into the second six of my pupillage, and if anyone wonders how it feels, it is just like driving your own car for the first time without an instructor. That said, my experiences from first six pupillage have prepared me for the challenges ahead and there will of course be moments of stress and panic. But I’m always reassured that by the fact I am surrounded by a wealth of knowledge within my chambers, and help is only a phone call away.

Pupillage should also be used as a moment for self-reflection. The competition is as fierce as ever. Those who secure a pupillage should be proud of that achievement. Those who are still in the application phase will no doubt feel disheartened; don’t. Keep going. Be determined and you will succeed. There is no other job like it!