

DEPARTMENT OF LAW NEWSLETTER

June 2021

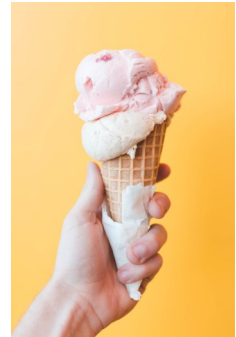
Here comes the summer!

As we enter the summer, some of us will be trying to grab time on holiday, though, as things stand, we may be confined to the UK and choose a staycation. Some students will have completed their degree and will be pursuing further study or entering (or continuing in) the world of work. And some of our postgraduate, research and accelerated degree students will continue studying over the summer.

Summer also means that we say goodbye to an extremely valued colleague. Dr Keith Puttick retires and leaves the University after 37 years. Keith has done much to shape the way law is taught at Staffs as well as helping thousands of students realise their career goals. He'll be missed in the Department and we all wish him well in his retirement.

The start of the summer also sees the end of another semester where our work, studying and socializing has been restricted by Covid 19. But, despite the challenges of the pandemic, staff and students alike have continued to flourish and succeed.

Whether the summer finds you working, holidaying or studying, we hope you have an excellent time and we continue to be proud of you all and proud to be Staffs!



Diversity in the Legal Sector

Rachel Payne, second year law student, discusses how those from all backgrounds are able to pursue a successful career in law.

The legal profession is probably one of the most conservative (with a small 'c') around and so it is no surprise that it may not be as diverse as it could be. Indeed, while the phrase 'middle-aged, middle-class and middle-minded' probably doesn't apply to the legal profession as much as it once did, there are still groups that are under-represented at all levels in law.

Given this, some may conclude, or may even be told, that their gender, race, background or even family circumstances will prevent them from being successful in law. However, these things are not barriers. Everyone will have their own struggles and circumstances, but this should not put you off your career goals.

Success comes from all backgrounds. Baroness Brenda Hale, a mother and the former President of the Supreme Court, showed us that women with families can reach the top of the profession: the highest seat in the highest court in the United Kingdom. I would not be surprised if she were told while studying that she wouldn't be successful or maybe that she should have given up on her career in order to look after her child. But her example goes to show that, no matter what, you should never give up on your dreams.

In her recent book, *In Black and White: A Young Barristers Story of Race and Class in a Broken Justice System*, the barrister Alexandra Wilson wrote 'I'm a woman. I am mixed-race. I grew up in East London and Essex. I am not posh but I'm not going to let anyone tell me that the Bar isn't for "people like me"'.



From those who apply to the Bar Course, around 35% of those end up in practice. At an event with Lincoln's Inn, Andrew Dakoutrous – a barrister who describes himself as 'BAME, gay, dyslexic, [with] ADHD and hail[ing] from a working class background' – said 'someone has to be within that 35%, why shouldn't it be you?' Your background is irrelevant. In fact, what you think may be a detriment your chances of success, may actually mean that you are the perfect candidate. It's one thing to show that you can earn a law degree, it's another to show that you are able to do that with 'set backs'. After all, undertaking a degree while working, looking after children or dealing with other challenges is an indication of determination that will be welcome in practice as a solicitor, barrister, legal executive or in any legal sector, or non-legal sector, role.

So, do not listen to the negativity, let it set you back or dissuade you from your career goals. You are the one in charge of your degree and what you decide to do with it!

Forensics and the Role of the Prosecutor

Dr Chathura Warnasuriya of the APIIT Law School, our partners in Sri Lanka, describes a series of workshops held in conjunction with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)



APIIT Law School, in collaboration with USAID, held a series of workshops, every Saturday - spanning four weeks, commencing on the 20th March 2021 and ending on the 10th of April 2021. The workshops were under the broad theme of 'Forensics and the Role of the Prosecutor' aimed at inculcating a continuous learning process for undergraduates and young lawyers. The individual topics were varied and structured around areas that are highly sought after by students and practitioners. Four workshops were conducted under the following areas:



Forensic Sciences and Forensic Expert Opinion & Testimony in the Criminal Justice System of Sri Lanka – conducted by the Honourable Justice Yasantha Kodagoda, (Judge of the Supreme Court) and Mr Kent Mortimore (Chief of Party, USAID Core Justice Programme).

Cybercrimes – Laws, Investigation and Challenges: a Sri Lankan Perspective – conducted by Ms Ashwini Natesan (Legal consultant, researcher and lecturer), Mr Ravindu Meegasmulla (Information Security Engineer – CERT) and Hithwathi (a non-profit organization).

Violent Crimes and Sexual Offences – conducted by Justice Shiranee Tilakawardane (Former Justice of the Supreme Court) and Mr Prasantha Lal De Alwis (President's Counsel).

Financial Crimes – conducted by Mrs Subhashini Siriwardena (Asst. Director General, Commission to investigate allegations of Bribery and Corruption) and Mr John Webb (Assistant US Attorney)



A large number of APIIT law school undergraduates and young attorneys attended all four sessions, enjoying their informative and interactive sessions. Theoretical aspects of the law were discussed simultaneously with their practical application; the students engaged in role plays, discussions and deliberations to enhance their knowledge. It was truly an opportunity to further the ethos of APIIT, to be leader in continuous and quality education

On your bike!

First year law student, Wayne Cartledge, discusses his cycling for Help for Heroes.

This June, I will be doing something amazing to help wounded veterans and their families. I'll be joining Help for Heroes' community of cyclists around the country who are signing up to take part in Heroes Ride 200; however, I will be looking to ride a minimum of 400 miles over the month of June 2021.

In addition to this challenge, I am currently looking at other cycling based challenges to follow this event. I also have a sportive on July 4th which is raising money for Help for Heroes, and the last challenge I am doing will be the Help for Heroes Big Battlefield Bike ride in July 2022.

There are already over 150 other veterans and H4H supporters taking part in the Heroes Ride 200 event and we are keen to encourage more of you to get involved. Of course, we want you to help raise funds, but we also want to encourage you to get outside, in the fresh air, on a bike. Look here for further information:

<https://heroesride.helpforheroes.org.uk>

You can also get many of the health benefits of cycling in the virtual world, on Zwift. Help for Heroes runs a "Veterans on Wheels" event every Wednesday evening at 18:30 hours. It's a social event and is designed to suit virtually all riders, regardless of your abilities, level of fitness, and is perfect for hand cyclists, recumbent trikers, and even those on those odd, two-wheeled things called 'bikes' - downright dangerous if you ask me. Join any H4H "Veterans on Wheels" ride by using the Zwift Companion app in the normal way. Above all, get out and ride with us. It doesn't matter if you can ride 2 miles, 20 miles, 200 miles, or even 2,000 miles, please get out with us and ride!

Did I mention you can donate at:

<https://heroesride.helpforheroes.org.uk/fundraising/waynes-h4h-fundraising-page>

And if you can, please share this post if you know of others who may be able to donate and support. :-). :-)

Thank You.



Student Union

Third year law student, Brad Allmark, talks about his role as a USDAW representative, his journey as a law student and his future plans.

USDAW Trade Union

I am the youngest Divisional Equality Forum Representative and one of the youngest Tesco Shop Steward Representatives for USDAW and I am currently studying the LLB (Hons) Law Degree at Staffordshire University.

NW Divisional Equality Forum Representative/ Tesco Shop Steward Representative

USDAW is determined to promote equality for all sections of society both at work and in the community.

As a representative my job is to take instructions and represent members in investigations, disciplinary meetings and other workplace issues. I have now been doing this for 18 months, after building a strong reputation as a rep. I put myself forward for the Equality role in August 2020 where I was elected to sit on the Divisional Equality Forum. My extra duties are to run workshops on issues like disability discrimination, women's health and tackling racism at work. I will be helping to organise local get-togethers and workplace visits to support and encourage activity amongst the under involved groups of members. I will also be supporting local events like Pride. Being the youngest Representative I feel is one of my biggest achievements.

The reason why I sit on the forum is because I want to help people who are being discriminated against and empower people to be who they are without the fear of being judged. USDAW is always supporting its members to find new ways to reach out to these groups of members.

Studying Law

I grew up in Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent where I attended Stoke Sixth Form College to study Btec Business and Btec Law. Whilst at college, I got a part time job working in a Tesco Extra to help me pay for driving lessons and start saving money for university. I have always had an interest in law and from leaving high school I knew I wanted to pursue a career in law.

I went around different universities but I wanted to remain local due to personal circumstances at home so I chose to study at Staffordshire University Law School. During my open day, I had a 1-1 tour with one of the lecturers, Louis Martin, and I had a really positive experience.

I liked the fact that the university had a more practical approach to education, and it was one of the top for employability. During my time I did practical exercises like mooted and giving legal advice with the university legal advice clinic (SUALC).

However, I really struggled settling into the degree and my first year at the university I even contemplated leaving and changing courses. My lecturers on the other hand did not want me to leave and believed in me so they supported me the best way they could.

During my second year at university one of the USDAW Reps at Tesco where I worked had a conversation with me. She liked what I was doing in my law degree and thought that I would be a great asset to the team so she helped me to secure a role as a Tesco Trade Union Representative with USDAW.

Part way through my training, we went into the coronavirus pandemic pushing everything online. However, the opportunities that arose from the pandemic gave me the practical experience I needed to progress. This increased my confidence massively and gave me the motivation and determination to continue the degree especially under strained circumstances. I am now looking at graduating with a First Class Hons.

Working with the union has given me the passion and drive to work in Employment and Equality Law. My next step is to study the LLM LPC at the University of Law in Birmingham, which I am really excited about. I am also looking forward to developing my role as a Trade Union Representative and the opportunities and experience that this may bring.



Emma Peake, third year law student, discusses her experiences of internship

Trying to gain work experience in the legal sector can persist to be a challenge, trying to gain experience during a pandemic was near impossible. So what do we do now? Stuck at home, unable to get experience, wasting valuable time? I found myself in this situation during my second year at Staffordshire University; however I was able to gain some work experience during the pandemic. I participated in many virtual internships from Linklaters, Leo Cussens, Latham and Watkins, Pinsent Masons, Kennedy's, Clifford Chance, Slaughter and May and Wilson Sansini, all ranging in different areas of law, through commercial, litigation, criminal law and the sentencing process for a fraud claim in America, finance and business. This allowed me to gain remarkable experience and skills (which looks brilliant on your CV), gaining an insight into the cases each company has, and allowed me to expand my knowledge and have a feel of other areas of law that I have not studied. As a result of my virtual internships, I received an email from Linklaters who have viewed my profile, offering me the opportunity to apply for a Training Contract in commercial law, where I would sit half in London and the remainder in China, with a guaranteed solicitor role in either Hong Kong, Beijing or Shanghai. All my internships came from a sight called "The Forge"; there are many opportunities on there and they are open (and free) to everyone. At the end, you gain a certification award and can then put the internship as well as your new (or improved) skills on your CV. I would highly recommend this to all who wish to obtain a career in the legal sector. If you are interested in participating in virtual internships, please use this link to sign up: [Create a Free Student Account | Forge \(theforge.com\)](https://www.theforge.com)

SULAC

Tracey Horton, Senior Lecturer and Manager of SULAC, describes the work of the University's Legal Advice Clinic

The Staffordshire University Legal Advice Clinic (SULAC) launched on 15th October 2018. The service provides free legal advice to the general public and certain sectors of the community across Staffordshire.

SULAC is run as a module in the final year of the LLB. Following a face to face interview, supervised by a solicitor, the students provide written advice on a range of issues including housing, family, consumer and employment law.

In 2019/2020 we had 10 clinics. Working with only around 20 students and one clinic manager means that students have to show exceptional commitment and dedication. Organisation is also key. We have a bespoke case management system to ensure that we are paperless and GDPR compliant.

Since inception, SULAC has assisted 603 clients.

The way SULAC offers its service and the collaboration with the local community makes it unique. In 2019/2020 SULAC offered clinics to the general public at Stoke County Court and two community hubs: Signpost Stafford and House of

Bread. These are both grass root community hubs in the middle of a council estate and aimed at the homeless and those most vulnerable.

The Court clinic was created as a direct response to a request from the local district judges as they are struggling to cope with the number of litigants in person.

Once a month, SULAC provided a clinic to officers and staff at HMP Stafford. The students are also integrated into the prison system and often attend adjudications with the governors. We also provided a similar service to a military base, Beacon Barracks.

SULAC provided clinics to staff at County Hospital and Royal Stoke University Hospital. We also offered a priority link to cancer patients within Staffordshire via Macmillan Cancer Support and various other cancer support groups within the area. Finally, we also provided a clinic to YMCA.

Since inception, SULAC has assisted 603 clients. In 2019/2020 we saw 245 clients.

By taking the clinic to the public-sector workers identified above, SULAC is acknowledging that lack of access to justice is something that affects everyone. Public sector workers are often poorly paid and work unsociable hours meaning that they also need help.

When the country went into lockdown in March 2020, the clinic was able to immediately continue remotely in light of our case management system which is accessible via the internet. We were also due to finish clinic in the first week of April but we knew that people would be struggling so we continued clinic throughout the summer and assisted a further 80 clients.

As can be seen from the diversity of the SULAC clinics and the relatively small number of students involved, SULAC is really trying to address the needs of all of the local community showing our intention to be the connected and truly civic university. We are constantly listening to the local community and adapting our service where needed. In 2020/2021 we continued remotely but also offered a bespoke service to Women's Aid. This was a direct response to the increase in domestic violence as a result of lockdown. If you would like any further information about SULAC please email Tracey.horton@staffs.ac.uk

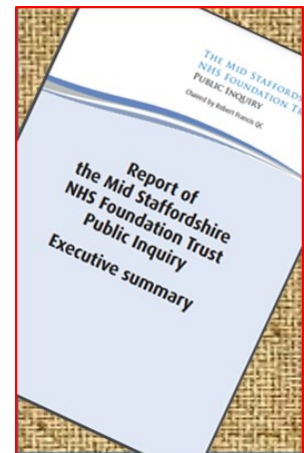
Anything is Possible

Staffordshire University alumnus and LLM in Legal Practice student, Sarah Bailey, discusses her journey

I started my studies in Law a little later than normal. I was 26, I had a 5 yr old and a 7 month old!! For me, it was more about fulfilling an ambition of getting a degree under my belt whether that be a first or a third, it didn't really matter. Why choose Law? There are definitely easier subjects, but for me that's all I wanted to do. I had done licensing law in the hospitality trade and wanted more. My grandfather also sat on the employment tribunals in Birmingham when he retired and I always remember sitting and watching him do his work from a young age (yes I chose employment law as an elective!!).

I started my undergraduate degree part time, and my results were good, I started to believe that this was the life for me, I loved it. In my second year I decided to go all in and went full time with my studies, slightly nervous that I was going to be the oldest in the class but I have to say it never felt like that and I embraced university life (well most of it!!). I ended up with a decent 2:1 - something I never thought possible.

After studying, I was lucky enough to become part of the Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust Hospital Inquiry, firstly as an EPE Courtroom Operator, which meant I presented the evidence to the inquiry. Due to the fact that I was the only person (apart from Sir Robert Francis) to spend every day in the formal hearings (133 days to be precise), I was asked by the Department of Health to stay on and help to research for the final report, which I did willingly. I am now forever recorded in the report as the Trial Director (which was what the chairman and lead counsel referred to me as!!) it sounds grander than it really was but I am proud of that! This job also took me to Northern Ireland to another Inquiry into Hyponatraemic related deaths and I spent 4 weeks presenting evidence. People always assume that solicitors and



I am now forever recorded in the report as the Trial Director

barristers spend their time in court rooms, this gave me an insight into other ways legal training can be put into practice.

Whilst over the past few years my roles have not been in a legal setting, wherever you are, legal training will stand you in good stead. I have worked with volunteers, with prisoners and, for a few years, animals! But my law degree has always been relevant. When the pandemic hit, I was furloughed. I can't stand having nothing to do so I looked into post graduate study. At first, I looked at teaching, but then the realisation hit, this is my chance to be in a field that I love and am totally passionate about - Law was the answer. So here I am, at 42 years of age, studying legal practice and completing my masters. It just goes to show at any age you can achieve what you want - don't let anyone tell you any different - Anything is possible.

It just goes to show at any age you can achieve what you want

WORK EXPERIENCE AND HOW TO GET IT

Vicky Cook, Career Relationship Manager School of Law, Policing and Forensics, discusses the benefits of work experience

Why does everyone keep going on about work experience? Well, there are some really good reasons why and I'll run through those in a moment. But the first reason is that employers simply expect graduate applicants to have developed some employability/transferrable skills in the workplace. Research shows that many graduate employers think that having employability skills (developed in the work place) is as, or more important, to them than degree subject. And for those of you considering becoming a legal professional work experience is *really* important; the new Solicitors Qualifying Exam will require students to have two years Qualifying Work Experience prior to qualifying as a solicitor. This can be via a training contract after Uni, but anything law related you do at Uni would count towards the two years, thus reducing the length of your training contract.

Other benefits include:

- ◆ It's a great way to try different careers and explore different job roles
- ◆ It will provide you with the opportunity to build confidence and learn new skills and work processes
- ◆ You will get a feel for how people work and how things get done
- ◆ You will develop those all-important employability skills
- ◆ You can add your experience, and your employability skills, to your CV and make a really stand out application!
- ◆ You will start to build your professional network

With regard to what type of experience you can get:

If you want to be a solicitor, barrister or other legal professional then look out for vacation schemes, mini pupillages, insight days, court marshalling opportunities and go on court visits.

Get involved in the student law society and student societies, including debating and mooting <https://www.staffsunion.com/activities/society/lawsociety/>

- ◆ Look for placements and work experience opportunities. We have a couple of fabulous modules here at Staffs - the Staffordshire University legal advice clinic module and the law work experience module - which can help you gain relevant experience
- ◆ Part time jobs - you develop employability skills in the workplace, regardless of what you are doing
- ◆ The Uni recruits Student Ambassadors at the start of every academic year
- ◆ The Students' Union recruit lots of on campus staff
- ◆ Unitemps, the University's recruitment agency, recruit students to work in the local area www.unitemps.com
- ◆ Volunteer - although volunteers don't get paid, you usually get lots of fantastic training
- ◆ Mentoring - become a University mentor to new first year students <https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/careers/staffs-peer-mentoring-scheme>
- ◆ Work shadowing can also get you exposure to the working environment
- ◆ Just about anything, then, that gets you exposure to a 'work place'!

Find out more:

Information about legal work experience <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/law-work-experience> and <https://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/law-solicitors>

And more general information about careers in law <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector>

Work experience opportunities <https://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/legal-law>

More guidance on getting legal experience <https://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/legal-law> and <https://www.chambersstudent.co.uk/where-to-start/newsletter/legal-work-experience>

Getting help:

The University's fabulous Career Coaches can help with all things career-related, but specifically thinking about and applying for work experience. You can arrange a 1 to 1 meeting via MS Teams by going to www.staffs.ac.uk/careers and clicking on the MyCareer tile. Then click on the Students link and sign in with your Uni username and password. Look for the 'book an appointment' link in the right hand menu, pick a slot and click 'book'.

Vicky Cook, Career Relationship Manager School of Law, Policing and Forensics.
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