**The apprenticeship route and the new SQE**

Most independent advice agencies in London have paid advice staff who are over 25 years of age and have degrees, but under the current process have little chance of becoming a solicitor, principally because of the cost of the GDL and the LPC, and the availability of training contracts. Under the new process the SQE/QWE can be undertaken as part of an apprenticeship, but because of their age such an apprenticeship route would not receive direct government financial support (government support stops at 25 yrs).

**New rules**

Under new rules concerning the Apprenticeship Levy, corporate law firms and local authorities who are also supporters of our sector, can transfer up to 25% of their Levy to organisations in the advice sector to fund apprenticeships. This means that all the training fees (including assessment and exam fees) can be met by Apprenticeship Levy transfers.

One practical thing to bear in mind here is that under the apprenticeship route the advice centre employer must be prepared to release supported members of staff for 20% of their time to undertake study at a supporting law school.

**What have we learnt so far?**

Since September 2020, we have been supporting ten apprentices including seven remotely who are employed by sister agencies. Observing the apprentices progress, we do not believe the SQE1&2 apprentice solicitor pathway will be right for all community advice organisations, but it will work very well for most. The key differential is whether the host advice organisation is already undertaking substantive relevant casework, and that the identified apprentice will be part of that. If the advice organisation is largely an 'advice only' body reliant mainly on referring out its users, then the apprenticeship solicitor route is not going to be for them and will not work. Legal apprentices have to undertake qualifying work experience. We have attached a sample learning agreement by way of illustration.

**Overview**

If sister advice centres support identified staff members from their local community to become solicitors it will send an important positive message to all their employees, whilst at the same time helping to deal with a developing​ skills crisis and change the offer, they can make concerning social welfare advice to their local communities.

**BPP Law School**

We have been working with BPP, but University of Law also supports graduate apprentice solicitor programmes. I have attached two briefing papers from BPP.

**Applications open for September 2022** - [https://www.bpp.com/account](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/moM5CmylZFj91DuGQ-gD?domain=bpp.com)

* Sep 22: Paralegal Apprenticeship, Solicitor Apprenticeship (6 years), ***Graduate Entry Solicitor Apprenticeship – applications currently open***
* Jan 23: Solicitor Apprenticeship with Exemptions (4 years) for BPP paralegals progressing from the Jan 21-Dec 22 cohort - applications will open later in 2022.

University House works closely with twenty large commercial law firms, many of which support this work and are prepared to donate some of their Apprenticeship Levy. If you are interested in supporting one of your colleagues to become an apprentice solicitor, then please contact me and I can help arrange an Apprenticeship Levy transfer.