



Chris Sweetman

Some people know what they want to do from a young age, that wasn't the case with me. I just knew that I was academic and enjoyed learning. It was only when I opted to take Law at A-Level that an interest in Law really took hold and I knew that that was what I wanted to pursue. The difficulty I had was that I was from a low socio-economic background and not only didn't know anyone in the legal field, but I had never come across the legal profession at all.

This is what led to me contacting as many law firms as I could to secure work experience and so that I could get a feel for the profession and the various areas of law within it. I was lucky enough to obtain work experience at both high street and national firms, shadowing various solicitors and really getting a feel for the day-to-day life at each workplace. I am also a proud alumni member of the Sutton Trusts Pathways to Law program which I participated in whilst I was still taking my A-Levels. This is a fantastic programme designed to help those from underprivileged and underrepresented groups gain access to the profession. It certainly encouraged me to study law at university and complete my law degree at the University of Leicester.

The difficulty I then faced was that despite completing my undergraduate degree I could not afford to complete further studies; I had no option but to find full time employment as soon as I graduated. This is how I found Conveyancing. I was keen to find a job that utilised my degree and having enjoyed and excelled at my Land Law module I was pleased to find a role, full time, that allowed me to continue to work in law.

Over the years I have worked in both volume and high street conveyancing firms, giving me a real insight into the way that both types of firm work and giving me great exposure to a wide variety of transactions, legal scenarios, and people. At my previous firm I was able to build strong relationships with agents up and down the country and I learnt how to deal with matters both quickly and efficiently whilst maintaining high standards. I also had the opportunity to learn from some fantastic colleagues, some of which had decades of experience that they were more than happy to pass on.

In high street conveyancing I have been able to take more ownership over my files and have been able to build long lasting relationships with local agents and local repeat clients. Something which I really value. I have also been very lucky to be supported by a fantastic partner and head of department and I have been able to deepen my knowledge and understanding whilst working within her team. It is very important to find a role model when starting out as the right role model really gives you the opportunity to develop and become the best version of yourself that you can be.

For me, obtaining a qualification in conveyancing meant a lot and so I took the opportunity to study to become a Licensed Conveyancer, eventually qualifying in 2022, six years after starting my first role. This is one of the fantastic aspects of conveyancing, where someone like me can obtain a qualification and work alongside other Licensed Conveyancers, Legal Executives and Solicitors in the same role, offering the same advice and the same level of service.



Importantly obtaining a licence instead of following the traditional route into law has not prevented me from progressing and I have found that I have the same opportunity to climb the legal career ladder as the solicitors at my firm. In fact, I was able to achieve promotion to associate quite quickly as I already had a proven track record by the time that I qualified.

Conveyancing is highly rewarding; nothing beats the call on completion day where you can tell your client that they can collect their keys. But it's not only about the first-time buyers and the families making the next step on the property ladder. It's about helping people through the difficult moments in their lives too. Whether that's a sale as the result of a divorce or executors handling the sale of a late parent's property.

That's not to say there aren't challenging aspects. A conveyancer must not only have sound legal knowledge but must also be able to read, react and respond to people. Each client is different, each client has different expectations, and each client has a different level of knowledge of the legal process. Understanding that and being able to tailor your service to that particular client is a skill that is developed over time but is one which allows you to progress their matter quickly and efficiently whilst most importantly keeping them updated. Similarly, every conveyancer is different, and each conveyancing firm is different. Building a rapport with the 'other side' and working together not only makes things easier for you both but ultimately allows the transaction to proceed more quickly to the benefit of both buyer and seller clients. A great conveyancer also must have empathy, be able to multitask and must be highly organised to juggle the numerous demands on their time.

The role of a conveyancer is always changing, whether as the result of new laws being enacted or because the public begin to expect us to cover more aspects of the house purchase process. My advice to those just starting out in their career is to get stuck in, learn as much as you can from as many people as you can. Build connections and don't forget the value of online platforms such as LinkedIn where peers and other industry professionals discuss all things conveyancing. Don't be afraid to ask questions, or to take your time to find the correct answer and approach. And don't forget that at the end of the day our clients are the reason we have our jobs and involving them as much as possible in the process should never be forgotten..

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