

How Cherie Blair QC inspired me to be a lawyer

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📅 25 March 2019

At 14, I attended my first careers lesson and the usual happened. I was asked to turn on the computer, visit a website, answer various questions and out popped a career which I was apparently best suited to. Funnily enough, this 'sorting hat' approach never really had any impact on my career path.

The truth is: I would tailor the answers to the questions to ensure the system would always come out with the career that I actually wanted to pursue – I wanted to be a lawyer. This was partly driven by wanting to make my parents proud and also because I wanted to enter a distinguished profession – the problem was I had no real idea how and had no friends or family who were in the legal profession. So I was in a predicament - I knew which career I wanted to enter into but I required guidance on how to pursue it.

I expressed my desire to become a lawyer to a teacher at my secondary school and it was she who encouraged me to write to Cherie Blair QC (or Cherie Booth as she is also known). She was arguably the most well-known female barrister in the country, so I didn't expect a response, especially as she was dealing with some of the most high profile human rights cases in the country at that time.

I wrote to her explaining my situation and within a week she had replied to me setting out her route into the profession. She included tailored practical advice on A-levels, choosing universities, the differences between a barrister and a solicitor and the different courses available post-university. In this profession we would call it a substantive response and one that I could put into practice.

I ended up in the local paper with another girl at school who had been encouraged to do the same. The headline read "Cherie Blair Backs Girls", to which I thought, "How can they get that wrong?!" Now that I'm a trainee, which involves proof-reading draft emails and letters several times over before they are free from errors, I can fully understand why!

It's unlikely that Cherie Blair will read this, but it's a fact that the reply to my letter was one of the real catalysts for me pursuing this career and I will always be thankful for her inspiration.

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