


Summer Vacation Scheme 2024: Sophie Ewin

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My earliest memory of injustice was when my younger brother suffered a head injury at nursery. The staff, who were supposed to be looking after him that day, had allowed the two-year-olds to play football on the concrete, while unattended.

Consequently, my brother hit his head on the concrete and was left unconscious and bleeding for almost five minutes before any adult realised what had transpired. Only years later did I learn that they had been found to have acted 'negligently' and the nursery was also 'vicariously liable' for what happened that day. Years later, my brother has little memory of the accident, but I still remember what happened so vividly, particularly all the hospital appointments and consultations that followed.

Upholding principles of fairness and equality drew me towards the law, and when I started sixth form, I knew straight away that I wanted to apply to study law at university. However, in a separate sense, I think the problem-solving element of law always excited me. Sometimes there is a clear formula or process that must be applied meticulously to find the right answer; other times the answer is one which has never been contemplated before. In a legal sense, this is like searching for an applicable precedent: if there is not one you can apply, you must draw upon your research to explain why a new precedent should be decided.

Fortunately, with a lot of hard work, I made it to university to study law, and I have now finished my second year. Around March this year, I began looking at vacation schemes. The process can certainly be overwhelming, and long. For many aspiring lawyers, it can be easy to assume that all law firms are the same. However, as I realised myself, this is the furthest thing from the truth. The initial reason why I applied to Browne Jacobson was because they were the first law firm I had ever interacted with. When I was 16, I participated in a two-day virtual work experience programme hosted by a group called 'Young Professionals' in collaboration with Browne Jacobson. What I loved about this experience was that representatives from the firm covered the basics, which was something I really appreciated. For example, we were shown how to set up a LinkedIn account, but more importantly, how to utilise it in order to network effectively. The way the firm was presented also spoke to me. Browne Jacobson is not just a law firm and successful business; it is a community. Diversity and inclusion are incredibly important core values for the firm, and during my time on the virtual work experience, as well as now on the vacation scheme, it is evident that the firm commits to supporting not only their clients, but also their people and communities.

The firm's values and sectoral expertise, as demonstrated by the variety of their accreditations, were things I were familiar with before the vacation scheme. However, since being here, I have had the opportunity to learn so much more about how Browne Jacobson operates. Something that pleasantly surprised me was how valuable the O-shaped approach can be to your own professional and personal development. Admittedly, prior to applying to Browne Jacobson, I was sceptical of whether such approaches could actually change the ways in which you think and work. But I can say with confidence now, after two weeks of being here and working closely with the Learning and Development team, that the O-shaped approach is one of the most useful tools I have ever been introduced to. Thinking about clients' needs prospectively and taking the time to understand their unique circumstances, is why clients here keep coming back and referring those they know to the firm.

Making the effort to be open to new opportunities, being original in terms of what solutions to put on the table, and taking ownership of the work I have produced helped me during the first week to immerse myself in Browne Jacobson life. Crucially, by the second week, I felt confident implementing the O-shaped approach and realised I was often doing so subconsciously. The flexibility of the approach means that it can be applicable to whatever task you are faced with. For example, during my vacation scheme, I researched for relevant

precedents, analysed schedules of value produced by clients, and worked in a group to produce a presentation on the energy and infrastructure sector.

If I have learned anything while doing the vacation scheme, it is that throwing yourself into everything can never work to your detriment. As a result, I think if I could go back and tell my younger self anything, it would be to stop overthinking. In a way, this is still something I am working on to this day. Of course, attention to detail and perfecting your working style are important, but there is a great benefit in being proactive. Take those opportunities you have never had before; arrange to have discussions with people who are different from yourselves, even when their opinions contradict your own. In being proactive this week, I have been able to connect with people in many different sectors, who have both traditional and non-traditional journeys into the law, and I have learned so much. The skills I have gained throughout these two weeks will be invaluable to me in the future. Consequently, I would recommend the vacation scheme to anyone who is interested in applying.

Key contact



Mark Hickson

Head of Business Development

onlineteaminbox@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0)370 270 6000