

# VOCATIONAL LEGAL EDUCATION IN ENGLAND - CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Introduction

Vocational legal education in this country is at a crossroads. Nine years on from the [Legal Education and Training Review](#), huge changes have now taken place in the academic and vocational pathway for solicitors with the introduction of the two-part Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE), the “super-assessment” for new solicitors. The mid-2010s also saw the piecemeal development of several legal apprenticeships<sup>1</sup> which have had some success but which are now showing their limitations. Outside the SQE and apprenticeships, a wide range of professional and membership organisations offer prospective lawyers their own qualifications and recognition.

Meanwhile, legal services are an economic success story. A 2020 Law Society/KPMG report estimated legal services turnover in England and Wales at roughly £40b a year and a total contribution to the economy (GVA) of about £60b. The sector supports around 552,000 full time employees and there are a little under 12,000 law firms (plus in-house teams). Legal services are a big net export and ours is the second biggest market in the world (after the US). Sources: [Law Society/KPMG report](#) ; [Businesswire 2020 data](#). The sector is evolving at pace: legal technology and AI are beginning to automate some tasks and new areas of law are emerging (cybersecurity, blockchain for example).

But Law is also a sector that continues to be plagued by barriers to access for those from non-traditional backgrounds. 22% of qualified lawyers attended fee paying schools compared to 7% of the general population and the differences are greater at larger firms and at more senior levels. This is damaging in many ways – perhaps most notably, currently, in the pay spiral and long hours culture that is prevalent in some parts of the sector. Many law and legal practice course (LPC) graduates incur costs of £60K or more only to find they cannot get a training contract or pupillage. Access is more challenging for those from minority ethnic and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Sources: [SRA diversity info](#) ; [Law Society Gazette](#); [Northern Circuit Race Working Group report](#); [Legal Services Board diversity dashboard](#).

The current complex landscape of vocational legal education, with its myriad qualifications, professional and membership organisations and professional titles, few of which link together in any meaningful way, is an unintended brake on social mobility, diversity and inclusion. Perversely, and far too often, it restricts rather than widens the options for future professionals in the sector - lawyers and non-lawyers alike.

Through the reform of legal apprenticeships and the ongoing development of a T Level in Law, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address these issues and support the creation of a legal sector that is more diverse, inclusive, healthy and successful.

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<sup>1</sup> There are currently 6 legal apprenticeship standards: [Paralegal](#) (level 3); [Conveyancing Technician](#) (level 4); [Probate Technician](#) (level 4); [Licensed Conveyancer](#) (level 6); [Chartered Legal Executive](#) (level 6); [Solicitor](#) (level 7)

## Purpose of this document

This paper is a primer for all those interested in how we work across the sector, including with clients and consumers, to improve the current landscape for vocational legal education. It also makes some suggestions about the way forward. These suggestions will not all be correct: some can certainly be improved upon and others, when tested, may prove to be wrong. However, they are made to stimulate the engagement and debate that we badly need.

Apparent complexity can impede reform and so the paper also attempts to demystify what is, in truth, quite simple. One of the several unimplemented recommendations of the LETR was the development of:

*“...a national framework for the sector [which] would simplify decisions about transfer between professions and qualification routes, and about partial authorisation. It [would] facilitate the development of specialist activity-based qualifications or accreditations. It could also provide a single framework to support progression from paralegal to authorised practitioner.”*

With apprenticeships and T Levels we now have the chance, a decade on from that recommendation, to develop such a framework. If we do not seize that chance, it may be lost for another decade or more.

In order to deliver effective and impactful change however, we will need:

- Far greater consultation with and engagement from the sector, including from buyers of legal services.
- Broad consensus on a vision for vocational legal education.
- Legal apprenticeship reforms (and therefore a targeting of government funding) that align with the overarching vision.
- Consultative and inclusive leadership that can command the respect of a wide range of different interest groups.

Let us begin with the current landscape and the impact that its complexity has.

## The current landscape: “authorised persons”

At the top of the regulatory pyramid are those professionals who are authorised to conduct one or more of six “reserved” legal activities under the Legal Services Act 2007 (LSA) namely:

- (a) the exercise of a right of audience
- (b) the conduct of litigation
- (c) reserved instrument activities *[mostly, documents relating to the sale of land/mortgages]*
- (d) probate activities
- (e) notarial activities
- (f) the administration of oaths.

Solicitors, barristers and Chartered Legal Executives are authorised to conduct five out of six activities (the exception being notarial activities). Another six categories of professional (most of which have their own regulatory and representative bodies) are able to carry out one or more activities, namely:

- i. Licensed Conveyancers
- ii. Patent Attorneys
- iii. Trade Mark Attorneys
- iv. Costs Lawyers
- v. Notaries
- vi. Chartered Accountants.

In total, there are nine categories of professional able to deliver at least some reserved legal activities and there are just as many routes to qualification. There is at least some consensus on the minimum academic level that professionals delivering these services should obtain in their chosen fields, which is level 6 (undergraduate degree level).

Notwithstanding this, some professions (solicitor and barrister for example) have chosen to set the threshold higher than this (at level 7) and even where individuals from different professions are ostensibly authorised to deliver the same service, some (often quite rightly) will have had more specialist training or a greater breadth of training than others. Solicitors have a wider breadth of training than Chartered Legal Executives for example and barristers far more training in advocacy.

There are also some differences in the extent to which professionals can conduct different reserved activities. For example, whilst solicitors and barristers both have rights of audience in court, higher court advocacy is reserved for barristers and solicitors who have completed additional training.

## The current landscape: non-unauthorised persons

Many legal services are delivered by non-authorised persons. They fall into two main categories:

1. People working under the supervision of an authorised person and delivering reserved/non-reserved activities (most paralegals in law firms fall into this category).
2. People working for businesses that deliver non-reserved activities (debt management for example).

Different bodies have created forms of membership or licensing for unregulated roles in legal services (i.e., roles that are not directly regulated by the LSA). Some of these bodies have created linked qualifications that allow for some progression. Some but not all of these qualifications are stepping-stones to higher level qualifications that can lead to authorised status.

The various membership titles include (there are others):

- CILEX Paralegal
- CILEX Advanced Paralegal
- Conveyancing Technician (Council for Licensed Conveyancers)
- Probate Technician (Council for Licensed Conveyancers)
- Member of the National Association of Licensed Paralegals (several levels)
- Member of the Institute of Paralegals
- Member of STEP (Society of Trust and Estates Practitioners)
- Paralegal (i.e., a paralegal who has completed the paralegal apprenticeship standard, regulated by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education).

It is possible to (and many people do) deliver unregulated legal services without any professional membership or licensing. Very often, such lawyers have law degrees or have completed the LPC or Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) but they have not done a training contract or pupillage. In

some cases, they have no legal qualifications at all. Trust and Estate Practitioners (TEPs) do complex work and may well also be qualified lawyers. The job titles used by employers for lawyers working in these roles are wide-ranging. “Paralegal” is common, but there are others too (e.g., legal assistant, assistant lawyer, legal caseworker, claims handler).

There is no agreed definition of “paralegal” but most of the professional bodies and many employers identify two tiers (regardless of practice area):

1. A specialist working in a particular practice area (family, conveyancing or civil litigation for example) and who is, either, managing fairly straightforward matters from end to end or is supporting an authorised person on more complex matters.
2. A more junior colleague who is closely supervised and either manages the simplest of matters from end to end (low value debt recovery for example) or supports an authorised person or a specialist fee earner.

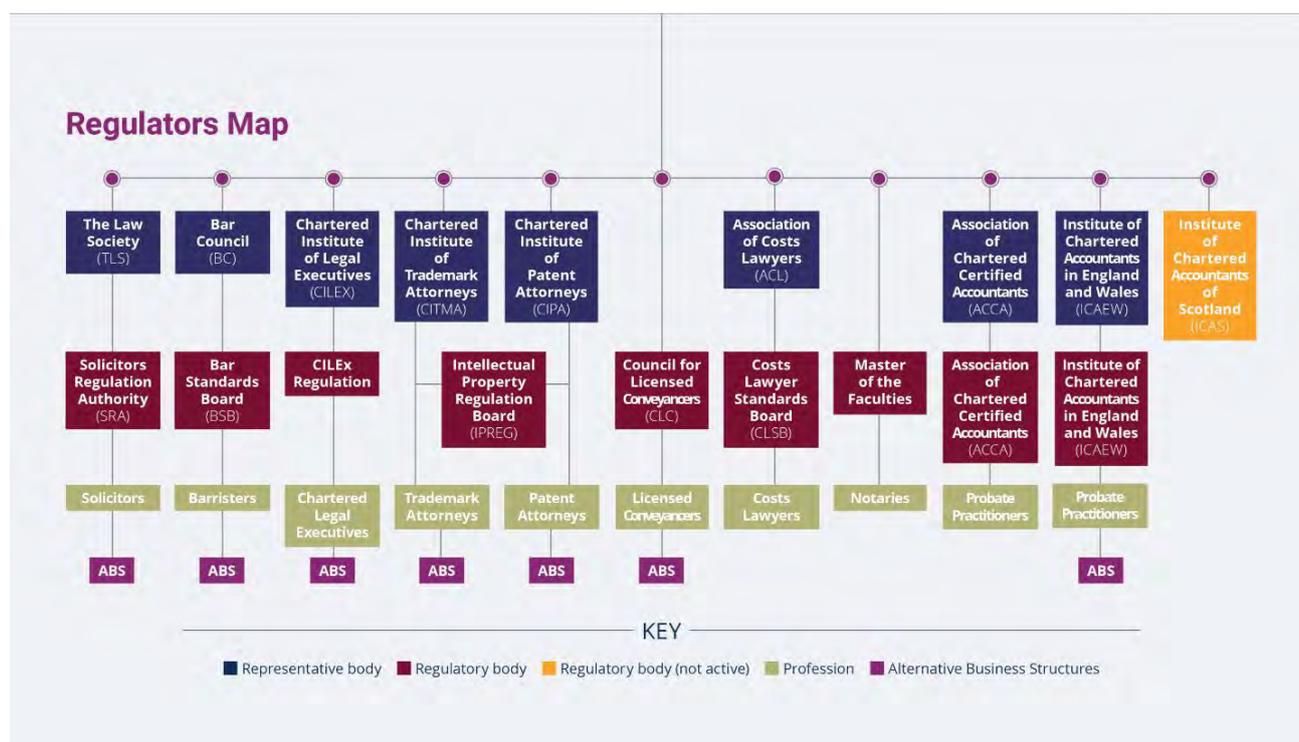
In law firms, these roles will generally be fee-earning (i.e., the paralegal’s time is charged to the client) as opposed to legal secretarial or administrative roles where individual’s time is generally not directly charged to the client. For in-house legal teams, whilst the positions are non-fee earning, the roles are similar.

## The current landscape – regulation of vocational legal education

The overarching body is the [Legal Services Board](#). Under s.4 of the LSA, it is required to “**assist in the maintenance and development of standards in relation to (a) the regulation by approved regulators of persons authorised by them to carry on activities which are reserved legal activities, and (b) the education and training of persons so authorised.**”

The Board does not regulate legal education and training, but it must assist in the “maintenance and development” of standards relating to legal education and training. There is no explicit link to training for non-authorised persons but there is a strong implicit link: those working in at least five of the eight non-authorised roles listed above are on a pathway to authorised person status and what they learn at this level “counts” towards their higher-level learning. Nearly all of those people are doing work for authorised persons. The standards of education and training in these roles also link to several of the LSB’s regulatory objectives, notably that of “encouraging an independent, strong, diverse and effective legal profession”.

The regulation of training for authorised persons sits with the regulatory bodies (image from the [LSB website](#)):



Beneath the level of “authorised person” there are no commonly agreed standards for different roles. Two individuals might do exactly the same work in a conveyancing firm but could be any of (these are not the only possibilities):

- entirely unqualified
- an LPC or BPTC graduate
- a Law or Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) graduate
- a paralegal apprentice “graduate”
- a CILEX Advanced Paralegal
- a CILEX Practitioner
- a Conveyancing Technician
- a member of the National Association of Licensed Paralegals (several levels)
- a member of the Institute of Paralegals

They could also be a solicitor or another type of authorised person. There is no overarching regulation for this group at all, save the requirement for supervision by an authorised person if they are carrying out reserved activities. Individuals and the training they receive may be regulated by one or more professional or memberships bodies or by none at all.

## The current landscape – progression and transferability

The LETR recommended the creation of a national framework that would “*simplify decisions about transfer between professions and qualification routes, and about partial authorisation*”. Such a framework would also “*facilitate the development of specialist activity-based qualifications or accreditations and provide a single framework to support progression from paralegal to authorised practitioner*”.

In 2022 we remain far from that objective. The two-part Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE) has made cross-qualification by other authorised persons harder. There are no agreed exemptions for barristers (even where pupillage has been completed), Chartered Legal Executives or CILEX Practitioners. Nor are there any exemptions from the subject specific parts of SQE1 (SQE1 is divided into two halves, FLK1 and FLK2) but exemptions are possible if the applicant can show they have qualification(s) and/or experience cover all the areas of law which are assessed in SQE1, FLK1 and/or FLK2.<sup>2</sup>

Exemptions from SQE2 are theoretically possible but candidates need to show they have the same practising rights as a solicitor and at least two years' professional work experience.

Further down the hierarchy of vocational legal qualifications the situation is no better. A conveyancing technician cannot transfer with ease to the CILEX pathway when the conveyancing market changes and they begin work in a family law team. A solicitor apprentice who finds they do not need or want the breadth of knowledge required for that profession but is enjoying working in wills and probate cannot change to a more specialist pathway and become a Probate Practitioner. A Licensed Paralegal cannot readily use their existing qualifications as a progression route towards CILEX Practitioner.

In apprenticeships, the jump from level 3 paralegal to level 6 Chartered Legal Executive or level 7 solicitor is too great for some apprentices and employers. There are Government/apprenticeship levy-funded apprenticeships for conveyancing and probate technicians, but nothing at all for paralegals at the same level working in other practice areas. Some of the apprenticeships mandate or are closely aligned with CILEX or Council for Licenced Conveyancers qualifications (and therefore memberships). Other professional/membership organisations and awarding bodies receive no such state subsidy.

## Diversity and social mobility

Many employers and providers have worked very hard to use the current system and apprenticeships to increase opportunities for non-traditional applicants and there are numerous success stories. However, it takes real dedication to make it work and there are also employers and apprentices who have been put off or have not achieved their original goals.

In some cases, the very length of a programme can itself be a barrier to social mobility or restrict access for employers. The six-year solicitor apprenticeship can disincentivise smaller employers who cannot predict whether they will need a newly qualified solicitor in six years' time. It may also, perversely, lead firms to recruit only the academically most able because of the high risk of drop out. The lack of any intermediate "stopping off points" at, say, advanced paralegal level, makes it an all or nothing bet for both employer and apprentice.

## The need for reform

In February 2021, I wrote, with the support of a group of employers, to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE), asking for a review of legal apprenticeships (see Appendix 1). Since then, the IFATE has worked successfully to reconvene the "trailblazer" employer groups that designed each of the current legal apprenticeships and there is work underway to design a new apprenticeship for advanced paralegals and a pathway for a level 6 Licensed Probate Professional.

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<sup>2</sup> SQE1 tests functioning legal knowledge (FLK). The exam has two parts - FLK1 and FLK2. SQE2 assesses practical legal skills. SQE2 also has two parts: oral assessments and written assessments.

This activity should be welcomed and credit given to those involved, not least because all are giving their time for free. However, the trailblazer system itself is not necessarily built to deliver the most effective and impactful outcomes in a sector as large or as complex at this one. Currently:

- there is no overarching vision or current likelihood that it will form part of a “national framework” such as that recommended by the LETR.
- most employers and many sector bodies are not aware that reforms are being considered. Trailblazer groups may only have regular input from half a dozen or so employers, out of a sector of more than 12,000 employers.
- there is a risk that the reformed apprenticeships will be more modern but just as siloed as they are currently. It is very unlikely that a future Probate Professional will be able to build on their learning to become a CILEX Lawyer, for example.
- it is unlikely that innovative employers and providers will be able to use the new standards to develop content for niche or emerging areas of law.
- it is likely that there will remain a lack of choice of end-point assessment organisation (EPAO). Currently, each legal apprenticeship only has a single EPAO.
- each apprenticeship may continue to have its own mandated or recommended qualifications, creating a further tier of regulation and authorisation beyond Education and Skills Funding Agency/Ofsted approval. This will increase barriers for entry for providers and reduce competition.
- funding will flow to those fortunate and engaged employers, providers and awarding organisations who have either had a seat at the table or like the apprenticeships designed by the trailblazer groups. It is the future lawyers of these firms with who will benefit but this risks only being a fraction of the potential beneficiaries.
- The voice of the client/consumer is completely absent. Clients pay £40b a year in fees. It is likely that they too may have a view on the knowledge, skills and behaviours they wish to see in their lawyers.

## Simplification

A vision that works for legal apprenticeships and helps promote greater transferability and progression between other vocational pathways is not that complicated. A useful starting point could be the LETR recommendation quoted above. Beneath this it would be helpful to have some more detailed objectives, which might be summarised in as few as six “common principles”:

### 1. A better range of stepping on and stepping off points.

*Stepping on points suitable for, amongst others: A level leavers or those with other apprenticeships; T Level “graduates”; part-qualified and unqualified staff looking to progress within or enter the sector; those moving between practice areas; and non-law graduates. At lower levels, these must not restrict subsequent choices.*

*Stepping off points that allow apprentices to achieve their potential without being “set up to fail”. As a minimum at: paralegal/claims handler (level 3); advanced paralegal/legal technician (level 4/5); legal professional (level 6) and qualified lawyer (level 7).*

**2. Better spacing of progression options.**

*Apprentices and employers should be able to manage progression in ways that match their needs. Level 3 to Level 6 or 7 can be too big a step and can restrict social mobility and access to the sector.*

**3. Greater transferability/recognition.**

*It is currently too hard (for example) for a conveyancing technician to transfer to a Chartered Legal Executive or solicitor apprenticeship, or for a paralegal apprentice to become a probate technician. Poor transferability and limited recognition limits opportunity and restricts the ability of employers to upskill their workforce to meet market needs.*

**4. Equality across different areas of law**

*Apprenticeships should be accessible regardless of practice area. Prospective paralegals working in all the main practice areas should all be able to follow an apprenticeship (whilst recognising that it may not be possible to cover every niche area).*

**5. No mandatory tie to any one professional pathway**

*If professional pathways and apprenticeship standards are each aligned to the needs of the sector, it is possible to match qualifications with employer-led apprenticeship standards without mandating their inclusion. Employers and apprentices need the freedom to choose which (if any) qualifications to embed in the apprenticeships. Rigorous end-point assessment is there to ensure that common standards are met.*

**6. A suite of standards that permits innovation whilst maintaining quality**

*The sector is evolving at pace. Well-designed standards will allow providers and awarding bodies to develop specialist content in emerging areas of law and practice such as legal technology and AI, particularly at higher levels, supported by a common core of legal knowledge and ethics.*

Individual apprenticeships (or vocational qualifications outside apprenticeships) do not exist solely in isolation – they are vehicles for career progression and often deliver the greatest value when they help people to move up, move on and move between roles.

The principles above suggest retaining the distinction in the current system that exists between a “level 6 lawyer” (such as a Chartered Legal Executive) and a “level 7 lawyer” (a solicitor). Is that really appropriate given that they will often be doing exactly the same work? Arguably the distinction should be the breadth of their respective studies rather than the level of those studies.

The principles do not attempt to address the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for each apprenticeship; that is a matter for the sector itself. However, apprenticeships are fantastic tools for defining and assessing the competencies required for a job: an apprenticeship “standard” is exactly that – it is the industry standard of competence required for a job or profession.

And the legal sector has no shortage of competency standards. Many large firms have internal competency frameworks and each of the professional and membership bodies referred to above has a competency framework for its members. There is no reason why it should not be quite straightforward to define what competency looks like for the different levels of lawyer mentioned at principle 1 above.

## Assessment

Every legal apprenticeship has its own form of end-point assessment (EPA). Some also have embedded qualifications that apprentices are required to complete before the end-point, each with their own assessments. Trailblazer groups have significant freedom to decide what form of assessment is right for “their” apprenticeship.

Amongst the biggest current issues for apprenticeships and the planned T Level in Law are transferability and progression routes into solicitor, Chartered Legal Executive/CILEX Lawyer, Licensed Conveyancer and Probate Professional. If we can solve these challenges then, in time, we may be able to develop apprenticeship pathways for the other legal professions.

The CLC and CILEX qualification pathways confer few exemptions against each other and, currently, none against the SQE. However, the SQE’s breadth and depth means that a qualified solicitor can, if they wish, cross qualify as a Chartered Legal Executive or a Licensed Conveyancer. Few do so, because solicitors are perceived as having a higher professional status and are generally better paid.

Any apprentice embarking on the CLC or CILEX pathways will, even at paralegal level, exclude themselves from transferring to another pathway. Currently too, a solicitor apprentice cannot transfer to the CILEX or CLC pathway.

### What if...?

The areas covered in SQE1 cover all the law and practice (and at the same level) required by those other professions. SQE2, similarly, covers all the practical skills. An end point assessment could therefore be designed that included:

- only the relevant parts of SQE1; and
- only the relevant contexts from SQE2.

By way of example, a prospective Licensed Conveyancer could be assessed on:

- Contract, Legal System of England and Wales, Legal Services, Land Law, Property Law and Practice, Accounts (SQE1); and Property Practice (SQE2).

A CILEX Lawyer has a wider breadth of training and so would need to cover a greater proportion of the SQE than a Licensed Conveyancer; however, they could (as now) omit some areas that are not needed for their planned areas of practice.

### Challenges

- Currently, the SQE cannot be subdivided into subject specific modules. Is there any reason why, technically, it could not be?
- There are currently no partial exemptions against SQE1 or SQE2 and so a CILEX Lawyer/Licensed Conveyancer would need to take the full examination to cross-qualify. Although this is the current position, is it a logical one?
- To create better fit and transferability, one would need to adopt a similar EPA structure at levels 3 and 4 for the SQE1 equivalent. SQE2 is very costly and so a better approach here might be to use a portfolio of work evidence coupled with a professional discussion instead.
- There are slightly different rules for each profession. So, solicitors’ accounts rules are slightly different to those that apply to Licensed Conveyancers (for example).
- A fear that “modularising” a route to qualification as a solicitor will make it easier. However, one might query what evidence there is to suggest that a solicitor who has developed their

competence sequentially, whilst working, is any less competent than a solicitor who has learnt all their functional legal knowledge at once?

## Opportunities

- It would allow the development of a holistic, easy to understand route for lawyers across all levels and areas of specialism (i.e., that single framework recommended by the LETR).
- The opportunity for stepped progression: L3 to 4/5 to 6 or 7 and entry at any of these points. This will increase access, diversity and inclusion for apprentices and employers.
- It would not advantage some (and therefore disadvantage other) professional pathways or qualifications. A well-designed qualification should fit with industry-defined standards of competence in any event, and employers and providers would be free to choose which (if any) qualifications they include within the apprenticeships.
- It would not need to happen across the entire market at once. Starting with apprenticeships subsequent progress would be incremental, but the funding advantage afforded to apprenticeships would encourage that progress.
- More competition in the EPA/provider market. Higher numbers will attract more EPAOs (there is no employer choice currently) and more providers.
- Parity of esteem across the different professions. A conveyancer will be trained to the same level in their area of specialism, regardless of whether they are a member of the CLC, CILEX or the Law Society.
- The ability to create new technical pathways. The introduction of SQE-type content on intellectual property would facilitate the creation of an apprenticeship route for patent or trade mark attorneys for example.
- Stimulus for providers and employers to innovate.
- Better alignment with the regulatory objectives of the LSA.
- Transferability: an apprentice could begin with the intention of becoming a Licensed Conveyancer but change direction and become a solicitor with no duplication.
- The opportunity for apprentices to follow slower or faster trajectories to qualification. This would be better for apprentices with different academic starting points, those with disabilities and those with caring or other responsibilities.
- More equitable access to Government funding. Apprenticeship funding would be based truly on skills needs rather than because an employer has chosen a professional body/qualification pathway that happens to be aligned to an apprenticeship.

It is important to note that the SQE is not perfect. It is new and there will inevitably be areas for improvement. It also represents a base level of competence and some employers will seek more; both in terms of legal knowledge and also the more rounded commercial and interpersonal skills required by clients. However, “day one competency”, for solicitors and for the other professions and roles detailed above is exactly that. There is no reason why employers cannot build on and beyond the minimum standards in partnership, where necessary, with external providers.

**Jonathan Bourne**, Managing Director, Damar Training  
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25<sup>th</sup> April 2022

Note:

Damar Training is an independent apprenticeship training provider, established in 1980. Damar brought together the consortium that developed the first legal apprenticeship (the Higher Apprenticeship in Legal Services) and has played an active part in the development and delivery of legal sector apprenticeships for over a decade, Damar works with employers nationally, helping them to add value to their organisations through the recruitment and development of apprentices in a range of areas including accountancy, law, management, administration, customer service and travel.

## Appendix 1

Damar Training's letter to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (16<sup>th</sup> February 2021)



Jennifer Coupland  
CEO, Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

By email only to: [Jennifer.coupland@education.gov.uk](mailto:Jennifer.coupland@education.gov.uk)

16<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Jennifer,

### Request for a route review of legal sector apprenticeships

Legal apprenticeships have been one of the biggest successes of the apprenticeship standards era. Many talented, ambitious apprentices from diverse backgrounds and of all ages have now completed legal apprenticeships and increasing numbers have now used the apprenticeships as a route to qualification as a Chartered Legal Executive or Licensed Conveyancer. Many more are now well on their way to qualification as solicitors. In all cases, this has been achieved without apprentices incurring student debt and is thanks to co-investment by the government, employers within the legal sector and education and training providers.

I write with the support of the employers listed in the appendix to this letter. Together, we want to build on the success of legal apprenticeships so that the sector, which is worth over £30 billion a year to the UK economy and is a significant net exporter, continues to benefit, and benefit from, the deep and diverse pool of talent that exists outside traditional academic pathways.

The rapid evolution in the legal sector is only likely to accelerate post-Brexit, post-pandemic and with technology playing an ever more important part in how legal services are delivered. However, with the exception of the solicitor apprenticeship, legal apprenticeships urgently need review if they are to meet our future needs. Specifically:

- An increasing number of roles now exist for advanced or senior paralegals but there is no apprenticeship that meets their development needs.
- The skills and behaviours required has evolved beyond those covered by the current legal apprenticeship standards. The increasing popularity of concepts such as the “O Shaped Lawyer” bears this out.
- The most commonly used professional pathway used within legal apprenticeships has been redesigned by the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives so that its three stages (foundation, advanced and professional) no longer align with the available apprenticeships.
- Progression between different levels is challenging for some apprentices and employers: in particular, the jump from level 3 to level 6 or 7.
- The breadth of roles at technician level (levels 4 and 5) is growing beyond the purely “legal” into areas such as legal technology, legal operations and legal project management. Yet there are no apprenticeships for such roles or which provide progression routes into them.



- T Levels in Law are being developed but their effectiveness as a route into employment is jeopardised by the absence of a technician-level apprenticeship progression route.
- Structural issues and inconsistencies across funding caps are creating distortions in the market and are reducing take up of some apprenticeships.

We agree with the recent Skills for Jobs white paper that there are “significant skills gaps at higher technical levels”. We also agree that employers need greater freedom and flexibility to design, with providers, programmes that meet their needs. In particular, the flexibility to choose which (if any) professional qualifications are included in apprenticeships, as is the case already with the solicitor apprenticeship.

The fact that the apprenticeship standards for such a dynamic sector need review is no surprise. Nor is the need for review a criticism of the excellent and collaborative work that went into their original development. Indeed, it is precisely because we have witnessed the benefits of legal apprenticeships that we, as employers, are committed to improving the offer.

So that the legal apprenticeship pathway can be developed in a joined-up manner that meets our current and anticipated future needs, we are asking that the IFATE now institutes a review of all legal apprenticeships with the exception of the solicitor standard, and that the legal trailblazer group be closely engaged in the process so that the voices of employers across the sector are heard.

We have copied this letter to the principal professional bodies, to the Education and Skills Funding Agency and to the chair of the trailblazer group. We look forward to working with you and with them to ensure that legal apprenticeships continue to create opportunities for individuals and contribute to the success of one of the UK’s most dynamic and important sectors.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Bourne  
Managing Director, Damar Training

Cc:

Gun Judge, Chair, Legal Trailblazer Group  
Peter Mucklow, Director, Apprenticeships, Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Professor Chris Bones, Chair, Chartered Institute of Legal Executives  
Sheila Kumar, Chief Executive, Council for Licensed Conveyancers  
Victoria Roper, Interim Chair, Education and Training Committee, Law Society  
Julie Brannan, Director of Education and Training, Solicitors Regulation Authority



Employers that have expressed their support for this letter:

CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP

Clarion Solicitors Limited

Fletchers Solicitors Ltd

Forbes Solicitors

Government Legal Department

Horwich Cohen Coghlan Limited

JB Leitch Limited

Keoghs LLP

Pinsent Masons LLP

Plexus Law

Simpson Millar LLP