

JUNIOR LAWYER OF THE
YEAR 2022

HANNAH COLLINS

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❖ How do you see firms & the profession adapting to meet the needs of Junior Lawyers?

- Initiatives that widen access to the profession are starting to help – whether that's paying apprentices a fair wage or sponsoring someone through qualification – and importantly, giving them time to focus on that qualification as well as work.
- Of course, this is only the starting point. There needs to be an emergence of similar initiatives for retention and progression throughout, for legal and other professionals, if needs are to be met throughout someone's career in the sector.
- Operating mentoring programmes or buddy/ally schemes, help juniors learn from a variety of lawyers and other professionals. Especially in the new world of hybrid working, where learning by osmosis in the office is not a day-to-day occurrence.
- Importantly, starting to acknowledge the impact of individual wellbeing and mental health, will help meet the needs of all our colleagues – junior and veteran!

❖ What has been your route into the legal profession?

- As a proud comp-school graduate from the Black Country, at 16, I never set out to go into law or go to university.
 - I took A-levels at a local college, where I was encouraged by tutors to study two of my subjects, Philosophy and Literature, at university.
 - Other chance opportunities, and life circumstances, meant I came out of education after graduation, and spent the next 2-3 years working for an array of organisations – from a charity in Tanzania to a CAB in West Bromwich.
 - I took the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL), while working in a micro-brewery.
 - I applied and was offered a job at Browne Jacobson, as an Administration Assistant in a department, later taking a job in the Social Care team as a Legal Assistant.
 - With the support and encouragement of my colleagues and supervisors, I was given my own case-load, and accepted for Browne Jacobson a Training Contract, who sponsored my Legal Practice Course (LPC).
- Seven years after starting at Browne Jacobson, I happily qualified back into the Social Care team. I now also have involvement with the wider public law teams in the department.

❖ What made you decide to follow a career in law?

- During my undergraduate I was particularly enthralled by modules on political theory and ethics and (with a healthy dose of activism on the side), it wasn't long before "the law" and "our justice system" started to appear on my radar.
- The law both shapes and is shaped by our society. As a lawyer, you don't necessarily have to be directly dealing with human rights cases each day to effect change in that area. How we choose to draft a sentence in a contract, a line in pleadings, a phrase in our advice, or a word in a piece of legislation, will have an impact.
- I remain as passionate as ever about the decision I made to pursue a career in law and the reasons for that decision.



How did you feel winning Junior Lawyer of the Year?

- Surprised, honoured, and grateful for my fantastic friends and colleagues who make such achievements possible.
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What progress have you seen in equality & diversity in the legal profession, and what more would you like to see happen?

- When I started seven years ago, I only knew a few more people who had a different racial, ethnic or cultural background to my own. But no one really mentioned what that meant, or how the biases that exist might impact them.
 - Seven years later, with the tenacity of wonderful colleagues, the recruitment of our fabulous D&I specialists, and the exponential growth of internal networks and D&I groups, I now know a lot more underrepresented colleagues who will talk about that experience – both to celebrate diversity and to educate about inclusion.
 - At Browne Jacobson, I'm privileged to sit as part of the steering group for D&I that has formed. Our members feed into the firm strategy with input from our incredible community groups: the REACH group, PRIDE network, LTC & Disabilities, Working Families, Gender network and Social Mobility. We are also now collaborating with our Community Action Group, and I'm excited to see what impact we can have on our regional communities, as well as internally.
 - It's not about winning "Work firm of the Year Award", it's about improving the working lives of our colleagues and fellow professionals linked to the legal sector. Being cognisant of that makes us better lawyers, better employees. Whether that's because of the liberating effect on mental health, or whether that's because it means we can use that experience and insight to give even better advice and assistance to clients.
 - Moving forwards, I'd like to see more collaboration with external networks and societies, as this provides even greater opportunities for sharing good practice. I'm very proud of the growth of the Alliance Network, and what we can start to achieve in the East Midlands.
 - It was great seeing so many at Nottinghamshire Pride on 30th July this year!
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What is the funniest thing you have seen working in law?

- Far too many things to mention. But I do enjoy a cautious lawyerly sign, such as this one...days!



❖ If you could give some useful tips to the Junior Lawyers, what would they be?

- i. Be open minded – explore your career and what you want from it. Don't miss the peripheral opportunities in sole pursuit of the goal.
- ii. Learn from others and collaborate – a conversation might teach you something ten times more helpful than the CPR or Lexis could! If you aren't in the office, pick up the phone, schedule a Teams meeting, join a network. Lawyers don't bite (and if they do, they can't over Zoom!)
- iii. Do what you are passionate about – at times that will be hard but try to feel empowered in your own decisions – in work and in life!

❖ What else do you enjoy outside of the law & do you achieve a work/life balance?

- Like most of us I try!
- I'm an amateur Triathlete – but enjoy pretty much anything active. My partner and I go hiking and kayaking.
- I love to travel and I am lucky enough to have visited some wonderful and interesting places.
- True to my literary roots, I also enjoy a good book, article, as well as trips to the theatre and cinema. I'm a massive music fan and I love most types of festivals. (I'm writing this just before setting out to day two of a local music festival, and I'm off to the Fringe in a couple of weeks!)

An advertisement for KCH Garden Square Barristers. The top half has a light blue background with the firm's name "K | C | H GARDEN SQ BARRISTERS" in a serif font. Below the name, it says "Providing expert Counsel in Criminal, Family and Civil law" in a script font. The bottom half has a dark blue background with white text. It reads: "Many congratulations to Hannah Collins winner of the 2022 Junior Lawyer of the Year award". Below this, it says: "KCH Garden Square are very proud to continue to support the Nottinghamshire Law Society & their annual awards which recognise the valuable work taking place within the local legal community." At the bottom right, there is a Twitter icon and the text "0115 941 8851 www.kchgardensquare.co.uk @KCH_GardenSq".

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