

Paralegal News

NALP welcomes tie-up with Citizens Advice

By Lyndsey Jones

If you are interested in helping people resolve their legal problems, Citizens Advice wants to hear from you.

The National Association of Licensed Paralegals members who are qualified now have the opportunity to train as advisers at CA bureaux in England and Wales.

Paralegals have much of the subject knowledge and many of the skills and experience, such as dealing with housing and consumer issues, to volunteer as advisers.

Now the NALP has negotiated a tie-up with CA whereby members who have gained Level 7 Diploma in Paralegal Practice, Higher Diploma in Paralegal Practice or Level 4 Diploma in Paralegal Studies will benefit in the reduction in the time it takes to train to be a CAB adviser.

Citizens Advice needs more volunteers to be able to help people resolve their problems, such as legal or money issues, and in particular to deliver Adviceline, the single telephone number service across England and Wales. The tie-up with the NALP, whose qualifications are

recognised by the national standards body Ofqual, is part of the move to enable these services to be offered.

“This is a great opportunity for our members,” Amanda Hamilton, NALP chief executive, said. “Some of our members will be seeking to gain experience with clients because they are recently qualified, whereas others will have many years of client-facing work and just want to use their skills to help others. They will all find that volunteering is rewarding and varied.

“By volunteering for CAB you’ll also be playing an active part in improving the lives of millions of people and influencing the development of national and local policies and services.”

Citizens Advice helps people resolve their problems by providing free information and advice, and by influencing policy makers. Through a network of 393 bureaux across England and Wales, the CAB last year helped 2.1 million people.

“Citizens Advice is really pleased to be part of a beneficial partnership with the National Association of Licensed Paralegals,” Julia Dennis, CA volunteering development manager, said.



Photo: Roger Dennis

‘The skills and experience that paralegals will bring to the volunteer workforce will be well used’

Julia Dennis, CA volunteering development manager

“At a time when communities around England and Wales are facing more and more complex problems due to the effects of the economic downturn, the CAB service needs more volunteers to help it to support its clients.

“The skills and experience that paralegals will bring to the volunteer workforce will be well used to support people facing enormous problems such as loss of their jobs and possibly homes, multiple debts, relationship problems and navigating the welfare benefits system for the first time.”



How to become a CA adviser

NALP qualified members interested in volunteering with the Citizens Advice service can apply either to their local bureau directly or via the CA website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/join-us.

Once your chosen CA bureau receives your application, they will contact you. Make sure you tell them you are a NALP member so that they are able to take into account your existing skills and experience.

CA has a thorough training programme for volunteers dealing with clients but your paralegal qualification should allow you to be accredited for certain sections of the course.

First Dubai student to gain diploma

By Lyndsey Jones

A passion for law helped the first student from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to gain the Level 4 Diploma in Paralegal Studies and become an Associate member of the NALP.

Aarshi Mahajan, 38, who is an assistant to a partner at Taylor Wessing, a leading international law firm in Dubai, completed the course via distance learning after studying while working.

“When I joined this firm in 2004, law fascinated me and I wanted to pursue my study and be qualified in this field,” she said. “I have worked in quite different fields but my first law experience was when I joined this firm.”

Gaining the diploma has definitely helped Aarshi in her current job too. “I relate to my work in a much better way legally,” she said. And she says “fingers crossed” she also hopes to gain promotion in the next financial year.

Aarshi, who is also a graduate in computer sciences and a Microsoft Certified Professional, would recommend the di-



Aarshi Mahajan hopes the Level 4 Diploma in Paralegal Studies will lead to promotion

ploma course to others and hopes that it will help her achieve her ambition of becoming a lawyer. Anyone who is a beginner and is interested in following a career in law “should definitely go for this course”, she said.

“I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Aarshi on successfully completing the Level 4 Diploma in Paralegal Studies and becoming an Associate member of NALP,” Amanda Hamilton, chief executive of the NALP, said.

“This is a great achievement and we wish her every success in her career,” she added.

Letter from the chief executive

New world of work opens up for paralegals



At a recent conference on the “Future of Legal Education” held at the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple in London, Dr Nicholas Green QC, the former chair of the Council for the Bar, made the point that there are a significant number of both aspiring barristers and solicitors who cannot find pupilages or training contracts and who are entering the paralegal market “which is now growing faster than the profession itself”.

As the impact of the Legal Services Act starts to be felt across the legal sector, the role of the paralegal is beginning to be taken seriously in the profession as a whole, and I believe this can have only a positive impact on the future of paralegals in the changing legal arena.

The Act will mean that by the end of this year the working world of our members will be opened up as never before. Alternative business structures, such as banks, superstores, estate agents, accountants and insurance companies, could potentially offer legal services in the high street. Direct access to the Bar may also mean that paralegals could offer their services in this direction as well.

All of these moves could open up broader possibilities for paralegals and at the NALP we expect to see the numbers of those entering a paralegal career increase accordingly.

Furthermore, as Dr Green said at the conference, “the existence of paralegal capacity will exert a profound effect upon not only solicitors but also upon the Bar in the next few years. The impact can already be seen on solicitors. Paralegals keep costs down.

“Clients increasingly understand this dynamic and are saying to the firms they instruct that they will simply not pay for non-premium work to be done by expensive lawyers when it can be done at a fraction of the cost by paralegals.”

I welcome Dr Green’s remarks. Paralegals will continue to offer value for money but they could also see their rates increase as the demand for their work rises. While we are going through this changing time in the legal profession, we look forward to a brighter future with broader opportunities in the workplace.

Amanda Hamilton, Chief Executive



Some of the Sunderland University law students display their paralegal diplomas

Photos: Wendy Mszyca

Law students court success

By Lyndsey Jones

Law graduate Carolyn Turner, who was one of the 12 NALP subject prize-winners at Sunderland University, is now building on her academic success to follow a career in the legal sector.

She is working as a freelance paralegal for the agency AG Paralegal in County Durham and has just been sworn in as a magistrate.

“Working for the agency is really flexible and works well,” she said. “It builds up my CV and my skill set. Law isn’t just about being a barrister or a solicitor. Being a paralegal is really valuable and something I might consider doing in the long term.”

Ms Turner, 46, of Sunderland, is also thrilled to be starting as a magistrate. She is looking forward to the comprehensive training she will be given, such as a team building, and seeing a different side to the legal process.

“This is a service to the community and it is a way of getting into the criminal process while at the same time I can do a paid job,” she said.

Ms Turner, who formerly worked in

marketing and communications, gained top marks in commercial law in her third year, which adds to her collection of three other special awards she won in her first year.

“I’m extremely pleased to have won these awards and they reflect not only my achievement but also the standard of education at Sunderland University.”

Eleven other students on the NALP’s Higher Diploma for Paralegal Practice course were rewarded for excelling during the academic year.

Fellow third-year prize-winner Stephen Oliver was congratulated for scoring top marks in family law and company law. This makes him one of the few students to have gained five NALP special awards over three years.

“To maintain such a high level of commitment and dedication to study as Ste-

These awards ‘not only reflect my achievement but also the standard of education at Sunderland’

Carolyn Turner, prize-winner

phen has demonstrated over a sustained period of time was certainly an achievement that was deservedly appreciated by the audience and university staff in attendance on the night,” Peter Minto, senior lecturer in law and paralegal programme leader at Sunderland University, said.

Other third-year awards were handed to Anne Ridley for succession and Claire Cram for employment law.

Second-year prize-winners were Claire Jackson, for civil and criminal practice, Elsa Gibson for tort, Carole McArthur for practical employment law and Megan Dack for company law. In the first year, Ella Dockerty was awarded for legal institutions and method, Halima Ali for contract and Rebecca Johnston for crime.

In total, 35 students qualified in the Higher Diploma for Paralegal Practice. Amanda Hamilton, NALP chief executive,



who presented the awards at Sunderland University, said: “It is always a pleasure to reward the hard work that students put in to achieve excellent results during the academic year. It is also an honour to present the diplomas to all the graduates and recognise their success.”



Above: Peter Minto
Far left (from left): Elsa Gibson, Carole McArthur, Claire Cram and Carolyn Turner.
Left: Rebecca Johnston, Halima Ali, Ella Dockerty and Anne Ridley

Fabulous weekend offer that saves you cash



Now that spring is on its way, you can start planning a weekend break and save yourself some cash at the same time.

Treat yourself to two nights bed and breakfast at any De Vere Village hotels (pictured above), including dinner on the first night, for just £89 per booking.

Rates are subject to availability and the offer is available from the April 1 to May 2 2011.

Qualified NALP members benefit from free, exclusive access to fantastic offers on the Keep it Hush website, at prices that are not available elsewhere on the web or other sales channels.

There is something to meet everyone's tastes. On Keep it Hush you will find brands such as top hotels Malmison; Hotel du Vin; London department store Liberty; Searcy – with restaurants such as The Gherkin, St Pancras Grand, National Portrait Restaurant; De Vere – luxury resort hotels with many championship golf courses and fabulous spas; De Vere Venues; Village Hotels; Greens Health & Fitness Clubs and several more.

Membership is free and is now open to all current NALP members, including Affiliates and Students.

News digest

Appeal to help find work experience

The NALP is appealing to its members to help its students find work experience.

Newly qualified members are looking to shadow NALP members in their jobs, so that they can gain vital experience and build up their skills and CVs.

If you and your firm can help, please contact the NALP at: info@nationalparalegals.co.uk.

Two tie-ups with London colleges

The NALP is pleased to announce two tie-ups with London colleges. Stratford College will be running both the Level 4 Diploma in Paralegal Studies and Level 7 Diploma in Paralegal Practice from May 9. Call Stratford College on 020 8519 7362 or email: admin@scldon.co.uk

London College of Accounting and Management will be running the Level 7 Diploma in Paralegal Practice starting on July 4. For information, call 020 8590 9600 or email enquiries@londoncam.org.uk.

For further details of both colleges and courses, go to the NALP website: www.nationalparalegals.co.uk.

Tell us your story and your views

We would love to hear how about the path you took to become a paralegal and the reasons why you chose this career.

We would also like to hear about the work you or your firm does, particularly if it is in an unusual area of the law. Perhaps you have changed careers, or had a work experience that you would like to share.

Or perhaps you have a comment about articles in Paralegal News or on our training courses and how they helped you progress in your career. Please get in touch and share your views and news with us by emailing: info@nationalparalegals.co.uk

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