

Working for the Parliamentary Counsel: Amy Perkins

I joined the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) just over a year and a half ago; it has been a very steep learning curve but a really enjoyable and rewarding one.

Prior to joining OPC, I worked as a government lawyer at the Department for Work and Pensions and before that I practiced as a family law barrister and spent two years at the Law Commission working on family law projects. It was at the Law Commission that I first encountered the OPC and seeing the work they were doing really sparked my interest; I was quite envious that their job was to turn the Commission's recommendations into actual law and I really wanted to have a go at drafting! Some 3 years later, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to do so.

Drafting can be extremely challenging but that is a big part of its appeal. Turning policy into law is no easy feat and the policy often evolves as a result of the drafting process; for me that's a really enjoyable part of the job. We work closely with the Bill team, lawyers and policy officials from the instructing department, to clarify the policy and translate it into effective and clear law. That process requires us to understand the current law as well as the change that the department wants to achieve; you have to be able to look very closely at the detail but also keep in mind the bigger picture of how this change fits into the existing and developing legal landscape.

A part of the job that I knew little about before arriving at OPC is the role that the office plays in advising departments on parliamentary procedure and helping to manage bills as they progress through Parliament. There is no expectation that new recruits will have any experience of this, and like all aspects of the job, the office provides excellent training, with a lot of the learning taking place as bills that you are working on make their way through the House of Commons and House of Lords. I joined the office around the time that there was considerable public interest in Brexit legislation and it was fascinating to be learning the detailed, and quite obscure, workings of Parliament at the same time that it was front-page news.

In my relatively short time in the office, I have worked on legislation about immigration and Brexit, Parliamentary constituencies, the Windrush compensation scheme and criminal justice; I have really enjoyed this variety. Learning and developing the skills needed for the job in all these different contexts has kept me very much on my toes. Currently, I am an Assistant Parliamentary Counsel (APC), this is the training role in which all new recruits enter the office. As an APC, you work with a supervisor who will lead the work on the bill. I have felt very well supported by my supervisors and other colleagues. There is a real culture in the office of sharing knowledge and ensuring that each piece of legislation is the best it can be; even once fully trained, members of the office will work in pairs or small

teams on each bill. I can see that this is a job where you truly never stop learning, and I think that's the joy of it.