

Through my participation in the Planning, Public and Property Mentorship Scheme with 39 Essex Chambers, I had the privilege of being mentored by Daniel Kozelko. The experience provided invaluable insight into both life at the Bar and the specialist fields of planning and public law. Throughout the scheme, Daniel was exceptionally generous with his time, always willing to answer questions, share his experiences, and offer thoughtful guidance.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the mentorship was the opportunity to discuss not only my career aspirations, but also my wider personal and professional development. Daniel took a genuine interest in my progress and encouraged me to remain proactive in creating opportunities for myself. His advice on building experience, developing resilience, and maintaining perspective throughout the journey to the Bar was both practical and reassuring. As someone from an underrepresented background, I found these conversations particularly encouraging and valuable.

The mentorship also gave me the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of planning and public law from a practising barrister. Daniel introduced me to the legislative framework underpinning planning law and explained how planning decisions are made, challenged, and defended in practice. Our discussions on judicial review were especially interesting, highlighting the role of the courts in ensuring that public bodies act lawfully, rationally, and fairly. Hearing these concepts discussed through the lens of real practice helped bridge the gap between academic study and the realities of legal work.

Another particularly valuable aspect of the mentorship was learning how planning and public law matters are approached in chambers. Daniel explained the importance of the initial triage process, where barristers must identify the key legal and factual issues from substantial quantities of documentation at an early stage. These discussions also helped me understand how responsibilities are allocated between silks and junior barristers, and how effective case management ensures that work is distributed according to the demands of the case. This provided a fascinating insight into the collaborative nature of practice at the Bar and demonstrated how complex legal issues are distilled into clear and persuasive arguments.

Beyond the substantive law, Daniel also shared insights into his own career journey and the realities of developing a specialist practice at the Bar. Hearing about his experiences gave me a much clearer understanding of the profession and reinforced my enthusiasm for pursuing a career in this area.

Overall, the mentorship has been an immensely positive and enriching experience. It has strengthened my understanding of planning and public law, broadened my appreciation of practice at the Bar, and provided guidance that will continue to shape my professional development. I am extremely grateful to Daniel, 39 Essex Chambers, Cornerstone Barristers, and PEBA for making this opportunity possible.