



"I have not looked back since joining the NMC and can honestly say I have never been happier or felt more fulfilled by the work I do."

Rebecca Richardson

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I was called to the Bar in 2003 and, following some time working in Research and development at a hospital and working abroad on an overseas scholarship from my Inn, I started a civil pupillage in 2005, eventually moving to Hardwicke Chambers in 2007 to build a specialist personal injury and clinical negligence practice.

Nine years later I found myself getting itchy feet. I couldn't shake the feeling that I wanted to do work which had a bit more of a social benefit to it.

Also, whilst I had enjoyed self-employed practise for many years, I was becoming less enamoured by the constant travelling; feeling I always had to say yes to briefs; never being able to rely on what my income would be; my work being dependent on whether I had networked with the right person, or effectively enough; and working most evenings and weekends. I, therefore, decided that the time had come to think about going in-house and moved to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) in

2016. I was drawn to the NMC because of the opportunity to work in a field where the overarching objective is to protect the public, and my work can make a real difference. The NMC performs many functions, such as education and setting standards; we also deal with concerns and complaints about nurses and midwives within the Fitness to Practise Directorate, which is where I work. I am a development lawyer within the Case Preparation and Presentation team, which is responsible for the hearing stage of fitness to practise proceedings.

As part of my role, I hold a caseload and regularly present all types of hearing, including substantive hearings (the equivalent to trials). Responsibility for a caseload includes doing an in-depth legal review when cases reach CPP, advising on evidence, witness requirements and procedural issues and ensuring that cases are ready for their final substantive hearing. My caseload largely includes complex, multi-handed, serious cases, and the work is often challenging and can be very high profile. I conduct appeal work, meaning that I still get to take out my wig and gown for outings to the High Court. As a development lawyer, I am part of the legal management team and provide technical support to other lawyers within the team, as well as taking on more complex work. I am also a pupil supervisor and mentor.

I have not looked back since joining the NMC and can honestly say I have never been happier or felt more fulfilled by the work I do. I have had countless opportunities since moving and have been able to develop both within the organisation and as an advocate – I certainly feel I perform more advocacy now than when I was in chambers. Perhaps the biggest difference I found when I moved was how much it made a difference to me to be truly part of a team. There is a huge amount of support between the lawyers and from other areas of the team and, whatever happens, you are never in it alone. There are opportunities to develop, both in your directorates and elsewhere in the organisation, as a lawyer and into more senior management roles.

Practically, knowing what my income will be every month is reassuring. Being able to go on holiday and completely ‘switch off’ was a revelation, as was being sick and being able to stay home and rest (and be paid!) rather than feeling I had to still drag myself to court come what may. My hours are much more predictable (although hearings remain as unpredictable as they are in any area of the law) and my home time is generally my own. If I want to start a family in the future, I will have the security of knowing that I can take off whatever time I choose, return to work in my own time and that there will be a job waiting for me.

I encountered some old-fashioned ideas when I told people I was going in-house, including being told that I was ‘going to be a solicitor’. To the contrary, I remain in every way a member of the Bar, and nobody has ever expected me to be anything else. I continue to be proud to uphold the standards and integrity of the profession.