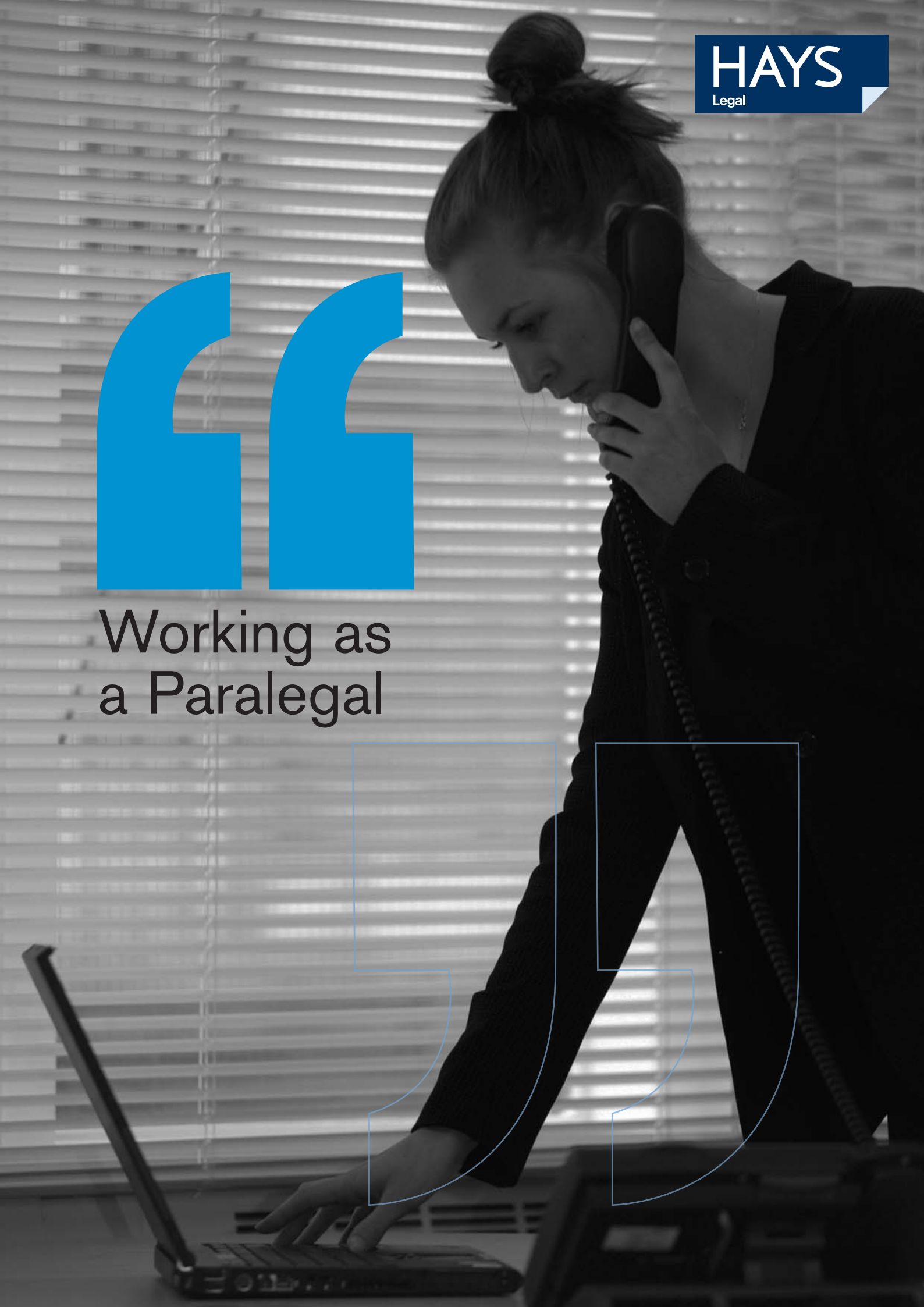
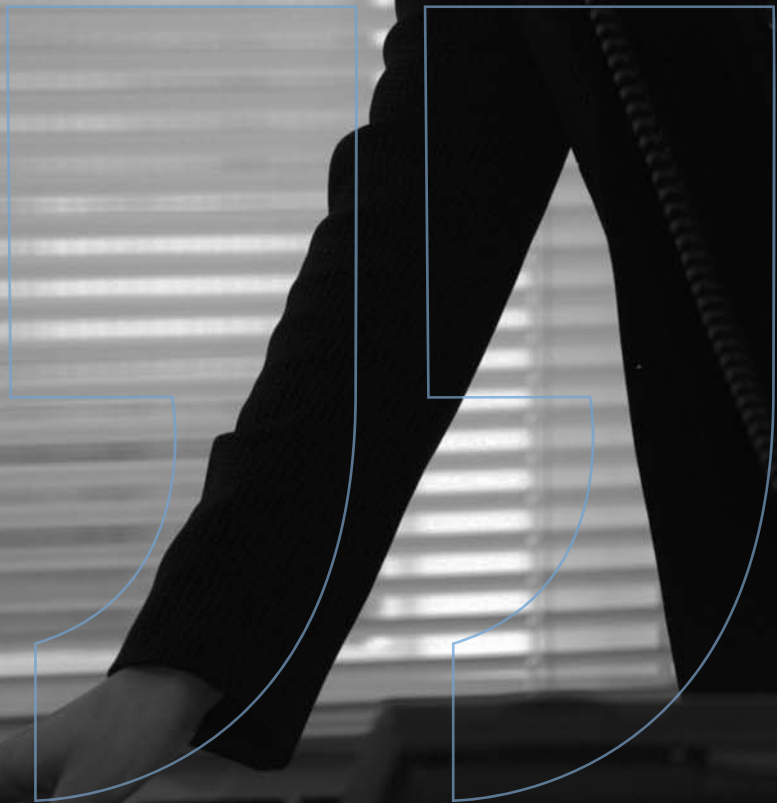




# Working as a Paralegal



The role of the paralegal in UK law firms has increased significantly in importance over recent years. Following the lead of the United States, UK firms now offer formal roles and structured career paths, enabling paralegals ultimately to assume similar responsibilities to junior lawyers.

## What to expect in private practice

Opportunities for paralegals exist across a range of practice areas, although until recently vacancies have occurred most frequently in corporate and litigation. The changing market conditions mean we are seeing an increase in roles within debt recovery and personal injury. You should, however, be aware that there are significant differences in the way UK firms use paralegals.

In the larger firms, the use of teams of temporary paralegals is fairly common with a permanent 'career paralegal' in place whose role is to assist in the selection, training and supervision of 'temp paralegals' who are employed on specific projects.

If you take up a senior role such as this, you can develop close working relationships with more senior members of the department and become an important liaison point from the firm and clients' perspective.

In small and medium-sized firms, where large teams of paralegals are less common, you might assume a more general workload assisting in basic document drafting, research, and attending client meetings.

## Other opportunities

An increasingly popular alternative for paralegals is to move in-house. We have found that some companies recruiting for junior lawyers at the 0-2 year level, are quite happy to fill the position with a non-qualified person provided they have the requisite experience.

If you work in-house you can often find the 'glass ceiling' experienced by paralegals in private practice is not an issue. The result often means more promising prospects.

## Additional benefits

As well as being an increasingly attractive role in its own right, working as a paralegal can give you excellent experience to put on your CV if you are looking to apply for a training contract.

Nevertheless we would emphasise that becoming a paralegal is not a quick route in to becoming a trainee - you will almost certainly have to apply through the traditional route even at the firm you are working for.

## Who can become a paralegal?

Broadly speaking, a paralegal is someone who has passed the academic legal stage but has not qualified as a solicitor in the UK.

You might have graduated from the Legal Practice Course (LPC) or the Bar Vocational Course or you could be a foreign qualified lawyer who has not yet successfully completed the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test.

Finally, although this is less frequent, you may have simply completed a law degree.

## Salary and benefits

Firms are now beginning to provide greater financial rewards in recognition of the higher status of paralegals. Starting salaries for junior paralegals with graduate qualifications can range from £18,000 to £25,000.

A senior paralegal with management responsibilities at a top City firm might earn anywhere from £30-40,000 with the opportunity to earn more through overtime. Basic pay at the London office of a top US firm could be higher still. Firms may also provide other benefits such as subsidised gym membership and a pension. Click here for full, up to the minute information on paralegal salaries.

## Conclusion

If you are interested in becoming a paralegal, contact our specialist consultants and we can discuss your options on what is becoming an increasingly rewarding career path.

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