

# The diary of a 'Divorced' Divorce Lawyer

*Michelle Kolapo, 39, is a Partner at TV Edwards LLP Solicitors who have offices in East London, North London and in the City. She lives in Wallington, Surrey with her 8 year old son. Michelle specialises exclusively in privately funded divorce, financial, children, pre-nuptial/cohabitation agreements, civil partnership and cohabitation disputes.*

During a meeting I had with a client he asked me if I was married to which I responded, "No I am divorced". He found it absolutely hilarious that his Divorce Lawyer was divorced. He then stopped laughing and said, "Poor man....I would not like to divorce you".

Contrary to what people might think being a 'Divorced' Divorce Lawyer has not made me cynical.... I would quite happily marry again, that is providing it is to the right person this time and we enter into a pre-nuptial agreement. I strongly recommend that if you are marrying for the second, third, or even fourth time you seriously consider entering into a pre-nuptial agreement, especially if you have children from your first marriage and you wish to protect their future inheritance.

My contractual hours of employment are from 9:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. However, if I am preparing for a court hearing and/or I have urgent deadlines to meet, the 'work to rule' luxury becomes a distant memory.

I am far from the Solicitor that likes to remain in the office shuffling papers. I consider myself, as a fearless advocate and a fair but firm negotiator. I recall a barrister who was representing my client's wife telling me that I was so sharp; I had better watch I did not cut myself.

In the early stages of my career it was quite humorous when I attended Court and reported to the Court Usher's desk, I was often asked if I was the Applicant or the Respondent, or the Social Worker, to which I proudly responded, 'No, I am the Solicitor'. The Usher would then ask, 'Is your barrister coming?' to which I would respond, 'No, I will representing my client at Court today'.

I have been with TV Edwards LLP for over three years and I can honestly say the time has flown by; no two days are the same. My previous firm was based in Surrey, which is nearer to where I live. When my clients heard that I was leaving,

they immediately asked where I was going and if I can take their files. One client quite amusingly called me on my mobile telephone pleading with me to take his case. As a consequence, I was still travelling all the way to Epsom County Court, Kingston County Court and Guildford County Court, as well, as the Principal Registry and the High Court in London.

I love bonding with my clients while we are waiting around at Court to be seen by the Judge. I find it rather rude when my barrister counterparts go off to their advocates' room leaving their clients waiting alone looking disillusioned by the whole Court process. The other day when I was representing a client at Court, while we were waiting to go before the Judge, he took great pleasure in informing me that he deliberately booked an appointment to have a verruca removed from his foot on the same day of the Court hearing when he would finally get rid of his wife's financial claims against him.

My son, bless him; would frequently ask me if I have a Court hearing the next day, as he knows that he is going to have to get up very early in the morning in order for me to drop him off at his grandparents who will give him breakfast and take him to school. Unless I have to go straight to Court, our daily morning routine is up at 6:30 a.m. out by 7:30 a.m. My son is dropped off by car at my parents' house by 8 a.m. depending on the traffic. I then park my car at my parents' house and take the bus plus tube to arrive at work for 9:30 a.m. Door to door my journey to work takes 1 hour and 30 minutes!

My typical day in the office involves reading, responding to e-mails from my clients and speaking to my clients on the telephone. I feel it is important to regularly keep my clients informed about developments on their case plus to instantly respond to their e-mails and return their telephone calls. Once my post is delivered, I will then peruse the same and dictate letters in reply. I find most of my communication is via e-mail and telephone.

The most rewarding aspect of my job is building relationships with my clients and helping them through what has been a difficult time of their lives plus showing them there is light at the end of the tunnel; being a 'Divorced' Divorce Lawyer I know this is true from first-hand experience!

I recall with fond memories the feedback from one of my old clients, which was, as follows: -

***“I have experienced many emotions, difficulties and traumas over this period, but your advice, assistance and professional support has been exemplary. With all the other issues I have had to deal with it has been extremely comforting to know that my legal affairs and the divorce proceedings have been confidently dealt with. I will continue to remember with fondness our discussions and laughter in the midst of what was a painful and difficult situation.”***

Within the next 5 years my goal is to continue practising as a Divorce Lawyer and to also sit, as a Deputy District Judge. I have already had the opportunity to shadow two District Judges in a local County Court. I found this experience to be very rewarding, as it gave me a better understanding, as an Advocate of the day to day challenges a District Judge has to face. More importantly the Judicial Shadowing has enabled me to further improve the way in which I present my clients' cases to ensure they get the best and most cost effective result from the Court process.

(If you would like a free 30 minutes consultation on divorce, financial, children, pre-nuptial/cohabitation agreements, civil partnership and cohabitation disputes, please contact me on my direct dial, which is 020 7791 7164 or via [michellekolapo@tvedwards.com](mailto:michellekolapo@tvedwards.com).)