

A moment with Andrea Tithecott, Senior Associate Abu Dhabi

September 2013

Welsh-born Andrea grew up with childhood ambitions of becoming a doctor. She studied sciences at school and had intended to embark upon a career in medicine, when a 6 month work experience placement at the age of 18 caused her to have a complete change of heart. “I did work experience for a judge and absolutely loved it,” recalls Andrea. “The work was really interesting, and from then on, I wanted to become a lawyer.”

Andrea embarked on a law degree at the leading Aberystwyth University, followed by Guildford Law College and then entered into a training contract at UK law firm Morgan Cole. It was there that Andrea gained experience in a number of practice areas before deciding to qualify into the litigation department, the hub of the firm’s healthcare practice, which focused mainly on contentious healthcare disputes and clinical negligence claims. It was there that she was able to put her interest in medical law to use and healthcare law became the sector into which she later specialised.

Ever keen to combine the two subjects, Andrea later went on to complete a Master’s Degree in Medical Law. “My dissertation focused on the legal aspects of medical practice in light of the Woolf reforms and I was able to use real-life examples, as one of my own cases was before Lord Woolf in the Court of Appeal at that time” notes Andrea.

After spending 7 years at Morgan Cole focusing on healthcare and clinical negligence cases, Andrea was head-hunted by international law firm Osborne Clarke to work on a high-profile case acting for a UK children’s hospital where the procedures for conducting cardiac paediatric surgery had come under intense regulatory scrutiny (and public interest) following the deaths of a significant number of babies and young children undergoing very complex heart surgery. “At that time, the inquiry into the activities of the cardiac paediatric surgeons at the hospital was the longest-ever running General Medical Council inquiry” Andrea explains.

On completion of the inquiry and seeking a new challenge, Andrea was offered an opportunity to expand her practice to include a broader range of regulatory work. This then led to her developing expertise across the regulatory landscape, spending the next decade working on some of the most high profile cases in the UK, including the London Underground tunnel collapse and the first ever arbitration before the Department of Trade & Industry relating to regulations governing high-voltage electricity.

Following her husband’s move to the UAE last year, Andrea remained in the UK whilst deciding on the next step in her career. Monthly commutes to Abu Dhabi to visit her husband soon saw her fall in love with the UAE and the Middle East, in particular “the weather and the promise of sunshine every day” laughs Andrea.

With the decision to move to Abu Dhabi made, Andrea set about enquiring into the opportunities available for a regulatory lawyer in the UAE. At the top of her list was Al Tamimi & Company, having previously been aware of them at her firm in the UK when referring work to the Middle East. “Al Tamimi were ahead of the curve and they saw the importance of developing a Regulatory practice, not only in the UAE but across the GCC” explains Andrea.

Supported by partners Essam Al Tamimi, James MacCallum and Stephen Forster, Andrea remains

impressed with the Firm's commitment to addressing both the current needs of its clients and anticipating their future needs. "This is a highly regulated country but with huge scope for regulatory change as the economy grows and moves away from traditional revenue streams. I remember being very excited at the prospect of the challenge ahead and inspired by Essam and James' enthusiasm at building a Regulatory practice at the Firm" recalls Andrea.

Three months in at Al Tamimi and Andrea is pleased with how well the new practice area is being received. "We have already helped so many clients and it is a great way for me to meet and interact with lawyers from across the firm as regulation interacts across so many sectors," says Andrea. "For example, foreign investors and healthcare companies are looking at the UAE as a home for healthcare businesses, pharmaceutical production and medical research. I also anticipate that there will be significant developments in the way the UAE manages its energy and waste needs. This will inevitably lead to regulation governing more sustainable ways of managing these needs. With this in mind, we are looking forward to the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week in January 2014 and raising the profile of the regulatory services that Al Tamimi is able to offer."

A true regulatory lawyer at heart, Andrea finds her natural interest in all things 'regulatory' sometimes spills over into her personal life. "I love sailing" she explains, but not content with just being out on the water, her affinity with rules and regulations has also led her to become the Director for Safety at her local yacht club and a qualified race officer.

With the sailing season in the UAE set to start this month and a number of projects in the pipeline on the regulatory front, Andrea is looking forward to a busy few months ahead both in and out of the office.