

Q&A five minutes with



■ Shabnam Ali-Khan, senior associate at Russell-Cooke, on how she got started in property, the challenges she has overcome and her advice for young people. She also shares some of her cultural recommendations

What do you value in people?

A willingness to listen - many people have a tendency to wait for their turn to speak rather than truly listening. Respect, honesty and people who get stuck in and are part of the team.

What do you like most about yourself?

I believe I am quite a calm and measured person and good at settling disputes. I think this stems from being a qualified mediator and coming from a large family.

How did you join the real estate industry?

After law school, I got a job at LEASE, a government-funded body, which at the time gave free advice on residential leasehold issues. My role involved advising clients and putting on events for leaseholders to help educate them and deal with specific issues. Working at LEASE was also quite challenging as I often spoke to people who were vulnerable or struggling financially. Since 2015, I have been in private practice, which has been a great next step for me.

What do you dislike most about the industry?

I suppose the very idea of needing capital to acquire property, which automatically eliminates a large portion of society. Coming from a working-class background, I can see how tough it is to get on the property ladder. The law moves very slowly. There are certainly changes that need to happen, but progress takes such a long time.



What barriers or challenges do you feel you have overcome?

I certainly feel that being from a BAME background and female have made my journey into law tougher. The sector is becoming more diverse, which is great. Choosing law as a career throws you into a competitive world and coming from a working-class background and being the daughter of immigrants has made it more difficult. But this has given me drive and understanding of the value of hard work and determination.

What advice would you give someone starting a career in real estate?

Be aware that it is a competitive industry. Try to immerse yourself in other things, such as writing articles or public speaking. Have something else you can bring to the table; otherwise, just being a billing machine can be quite an empty existence.

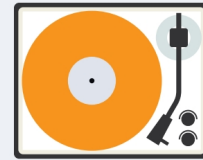
Diversity and inclusion are very close to my heart and I would advise anyone from a BAME background to get involved. Know what is going on. Join the groups. Attend the events, make yourself known and embrace your differences.

Be active outside work, do things that make you happy and look after your mental health and wellbeing.

I am a qualified yoga teacher and teach work colleagues. This is a great way to keep me fit mentally and physically. I also train in Fiore, which is an Italian martial art [with elements of] swords and daggers. Don't be afraid to talk about these things when you meet other lawyers and industry professionals. Get to know each other as people first and foremost.



▲ I have been watching the new series of *The Million Pound Cube* on ITV. I find it so gripping and exciting. It is interesting to see people working together, plus there are heartwarming stories about what people want to use the money for.



▲ The Beatles are one of my favourite bands. They have many brilliant tracks but 'In My Life' is one of my all-time favourites. John Lennon had a beautifully chilling voice and the song is a wonderful blend of sadness with a positive message.



▲ I found Matt Haig's book *Reasons to Stay Alive* so relatable. I have struggled with anxiety and bouts of depression throughout my life, and it shed a light on the issue and how it can be navigated. It also gives hope that there are things you can do to still have a great life, and that you are not alone.



▲ I regularly listen to *The News Quiz* on BBC Radio 4. It is a fun look at the week's news. I'm enjoying Andy Zaltzman as the new presenter. He is a great comedian and I like his surreal nature. I also love Mark Steel and am always very excited when he is on.