



Interview: Trainee Solicitor at Lester Aldridge

Aneta Zaitlikova started her training contract with LA on 1st March, along with four other trainee solicitors.

You can read about Aneta's (along with two of her fellow trainees') journey into law, what attracted them to LA and what their first day as a trainee solicitor (during lockdown!) was like [here](#).

Trainees at Lester Aldridge typically do four six-month seats in a variety of contentious and non-contentious teams. We caught up with Aneta to find out how she's finding her training contract so far, as she starts a new seat.

Tell us about your first seat at LA

My first seat was with LA Marine in their [Shipping and Logistics](#) team headed by [Linda Jacques](#). The team gets involved in various litigation, arbitration and mediation work for a range of clients from large P&I clubs to individual shippers and I got to attend a mediation or be part of settlement discussions with Hong Kong insurers or even the United Nations. I have also worked on several arbitration matters, from drafting claim submissions to completing bundles or enforcing awards. I have also had the opportunity to be drafting witness statements and learnt how to file documents at High Court. We also had a team fish and chips on the beach and organised a beach clean as part of our CSR day in early August.

In June I have been helping [Stephanie Adams](#) and [Suki Samra](#) and our [property](#) team as there was an SDLT holiday deadline and the team was very busy. I have drafted a commercial lease of the warehouse, a report on the commercial lease of an office building, liaised with clients and other party solicitors in relation to selling and purchasing residential properties or grazing land and have been assisting the team with providing independent legal advice in respect of mortgages. The team is also very lovely and good-natured and we had lots of laughs and good fun even during this busy period. Even when I was there for a month, the team made me feel to fit right in – the team has also organised McDonald's breakfast, Starbucks coffee and pizza and football evening when England played Germany.

In my next seat, I will actually have a split seat – I am returning back to the property team headed by Suki Samra and I will also join a property development team headed by [Mark Benham](#).

How does the seat system work at LA?

A few weeks prior to a seat move our training principal, Susan Cowan, finds out which teams would like a trainee. We then receive a list of available seats and how many trainees they need in each seat and we rank the seats according to our preferences and provide a bit of narrative to help Susan to allocate the seats. Susan then goes through our submissions and allocates our next seats accordingly.

What area of law do you enjoy the most / do you hope to qualify into?

I am interested in corporate/commercial or [international private client](#). However, I am keeping an open mind and see what the TC will bring. I might find out I actually enjoy something completely different and I was very presently surprised with the property work! I never thought I might enjoy property (especially after property module in uni) but found it rather intriguing and I am looking forward to my next seat to explore this area of law further.

How would you describe the culture at LA?

The culture is very open and friendly and very collaborative. I find that there is no pretending – what you see you get. All the people in the firm get involved and I have easy access to the partners as well as department heads (for example of marketing). The partners and all lawyers and support staff are very friendly and encouraging. I never felt bad for asking for help or to have something explained to me if I struggle – there are no silly questions. The partners are also very open about their journey into law, their progression or how the firm works in general and happy to share their experience even if they don't have to. The firm also allows for work experience for which I find very beneficial and inspiring!

What are the development opportunities like at LA?

It is hard for me to say at this stage as I have just started my training contract journey. However, we are encouraged to attend webinars, seminars and conferences or write articles about what interests us in the sector we are in. The firm also encourages their work placement students to apply for training contracts and they can continue working part-time when they return to their final year of university. LA also allows people to qualify via the CILEX route and I have seen several promotions on various levels and up to the partnership. The number of partners who trained in the firm is clearly a testament to the firm's extensive training and development focus and a strong, friendly culture and I am aware there are plans for further training and development in the firm.

Do you have tips for trainees just starting their training contracts?

Be open-minded and curious and do get your hands dirty. You will get out of the training as much as you will put

in and I found that there's nothing wrong with trying your best – even if the end result is not what is needed. And if you feel anxious about anything – talk to your colleagues or supervisors or other trainees – we are in this together!

Find out more about [graduate training contracts at Lester Aldridge](#).