



# Interview with a Trainee Solicitor at Lester Aldridge – Chelsie Little

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Chelsie Little is a first-year trainee solicitor at Lester Aldridge who started her career at the firm as a legal assistant (and, latterly, a paralegal). Having just begun her second seat, she shares what it's like to work at LA, including the culture and development opportunities, plus some useful tips for preparing for a trainee solicitor interview!

## Tell us about your career so far at LA

I joined LA in July 2018 as a Legal Assistant in the Lender Services team whilst on my placement year at Bournemouth University. Over the years that followed, I gained a variety of property experience, including residential conveyancing, plot sales and secured lending (both commercial property and residential buy-to-let). I secured my training contract in the summer of 2020 and returned to LA post-pandemic as a paralegal, working predominantly on secured lending purchase and re-finance matters for a range of major commercial banks and building societies.

My training contract commenced in September 2022 when I joined our [Litigation & Recoveries](#) team, who specialises in commercial litigation, particularly possession proceedings and the recovery of debts arising from unregulated lease and hire purchase agreements. The team also deal with a variety of enforcement actions, including winding-up and bankruptcy proceedings in both the County Court and High Court.

I began my second seat in March 2023 when I joined our [Real Estate](#) Bournemouth team, who deals in the acquisition, management and disposal of commercial real estate interests, as well as a variety of landlord and tenant work.

## How does the seat system work at LA?

A few months or so prior to seat change, trainees are issued with a list of available seats for the forthcoming period and asked to rank each available seat in order of their preference. Each ranking must be accompanied by a brief explanation detailing why you would like to experience the chosen area of work, and the same is then reviewed by the firm's Training Principal in line with workloads and budgets. Allocation is then released a month or so in advance of seat change.

## Did you do a vacation scheme? If so, can you tell us a little about it?

I didn't do a vacation scheme, but I did complete a 40-week placement. In the same way that a vacation scheme is, a placement is a great way of showcasing your legal skills and allowing you to seek out new opportunities. I threw myself into any task I was given and tried as much as possible to demonstrate an appetite to learn and a passion for the job, all of which go a long way when being considered for a training contract.

I was able to gain valuable insight into the skills and characteristics that LA look for in prospective trainees and equip myself with so many essential skills that I now use every day as a trainee. Naturally, exposure to a variety of fee-earning work also provides you with a personal advantage over other candidates applying for a training contract who may have less experience.

My placement year presented me with some incredible opportunities as a junior member of staff, and if anyone asks me whether a placement year/ vacation scheme is worth doing... the answer is yes, absolutely!

## What area of law do you enjoy the most / do you hope to qualify into? Has this changed?

My experience as a Real Estate paralegal created a huge soft spot for all things property; however, I always said that I'd go into my training contract with a completely open mind. Litigation/contentious work was never an area that I thought I'd particularly enjoy, but it's been a great seat that completely surpassed all of my expectations. A lot can happen over the course of 6 months, so I'm very much leaving my options open for now.

## What attracted you to the Lester Aldridge trainee scheme?

I'd worked alongside lots of trainee solicitors during my time at LA, and I always loved the sense of community. The rotation of seats means that trainees often do the same seat but at different stages of their training contract, resulting in a unique ability to relate to each other's experiences. LA trainees innately support each other, and having a network of people to rely on at what can often be a very stressful period of your career is invaluable.

LA also offers an extensive variety of seat options, including niche areas of practice such as [International Private Client](#), [Community Care](#), [Shipping](#) and [Marine](#). Personally, I felt that being offered a choice of seats would provide more opportunities than undertaking a set of 4 standard pre-determined seats, which is the way that most local/ high-street firms structure their training contracts.

## How did you prepare for your trainee solicitor interview?

I spoke with a lot of current and previous trainees to try and figure out how formal/informal the interview would

be and did a lot of research into the client base at the time and the kind of events that LA was getting involved in, to understand better LA's values and how the firm markets itself.

A slightly less conventional answer, but I also started watching BBC News every morning whilst getting ready for work. Commercial awareness is a big factor to be aware of when working with such a variety of clients, especially commercial clients, and I wanted to be able to make informed and valuable conversations if a topic surrounding current affairs came up. It's also generally just good to know what is happening in the world (and being able to consider, as a result, the impact of certain events on the clients/colleagues you work with every day).

## **What's the best thing about training at LA?**

Each trainee's experience is completely unique. Everyone works in a different way and has different interests, and each department really tries to tailor each seat to the trainee they have at that time. This is demonstrated through the type of work you are given (which can be allocated based on previous experience or future interest) and by setting individual goals periodically throughout each seat.

## **How would you describe the culture?**

Collaborative. There is a strong sense of teamwork which sits at the heart of each department; it is demonstrated best by the great working relationships among colleagues and the genuine friendships you see throughout the firm.

## **What are the development opportunities like at LA?**

Conversations about individual aspirations for promotion are usually discussed in annual reviews and coupled with targets, which are set to help achieve promotion within a desired timeframe. The process for applying for promotion is set out by HR and documented on the intranet, the LA Hub.

Promotions happen around April/ May each year following a selection process undertaken by HR/ the partners. The whole firm is usually notified in a personal email by the Managing Partner which is always eagerly awaited each year.

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

Be patient with yourself. You won't (and aren't expected to) know everything! Be willing to give whatever is passed to you a go, and don't be afraid to ask lots of questions; everyone has to start somewhere.

## **Apply now**

Lester Aldridge is currently accepting applications for training contracts starting in 2025 until 28th May 2023.

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