Interview with Trainee Solicitor Nikhita Lakhani

Nikhita Lakhani is a first-year trainee solicitor at Lester Aldridge. She shares her journey into law including how she gained a training contract alongside her experiences of working at the firm so far.

Please share with us your journey into law

I did my LLB at the University of Southampton and graduated in 2018. Whilst at University, I was unsure if I wanted to pursue a career as a solicitor or a barrister. To help me decide, I undertook a vacation scheme and a mini-pupillage during the second and third years of my degree. This 'hands on' experience gave me valuable insight into the day-to-day work of both a solicitor and barrister.

After I graduated, I worked at a few different law firms to further understand the areas of law I would be most interested in.

I was fortunate to secure a training contract during the pandemic in summer 2020, which was to commence in March 2023.

I worked as a paralegal at Lester Aldridge within the Private Client department at the London Office for approximately a year before leaving to complete my LPC.

My training contract began in March 2023, and I have returned to the Private Client department for my first seat at our Bournemouth head office.

Tell us about your career/seats so far

My experience so far in the Private Client team has proven to be both familiar yet challenging. Luckily, I have been supported by a great team who are always willing to answer my questions.

The most interesting part of this seat to date is the wide array of clients we have across the spectrum, from high-net-worth clients who require detailed inheritance tax advice to elderly clients who have instructed us to draft their updated wills or lasting powers of attorney.

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How does the seat system work at LA?

Generally, each trainee will undertake four seats, with each lasting a period of six months. The seats offered usually span over our three offices – namely in London, Bournemouth and Southampton.

A few months in advance of the next change of seats, a list is circulated with the seats available for the following period, which is based on LA's business needs. We are then required to rank the seats in order of preference with some supporting narrative.

What area of law do you hope to qualify into?

As I am only two months into my first seat, I am unsure what area of law I would like to qualify into as of yet.

Suffice to say, I did enjoy Family Law and Private Client when I was a paralegal.

What attracted you to the Lester Aldridge trainee scheme?

Initially, I met representatives from LA at the law fair at Southampton University back in 2017. I was immediately drawn to LA's open culture and the broad range of law practiced at the firm.

Upon researching further into LA, I realised they are not only one of the most reputable law firms in Dorset but the firm has several initiatives to give back to the community. One example would be the Free Macmillan Caring Locally Wills Month in February, which the Private Client team championed.

How did you prepare for your trainee solicitor interview?

I researched into LA and the varied areas of law that LA specialises in as well as the different pro bono activities the firm engages in, this is something I was keen to be a part of.

Generally, there are competency based questions asked so I made a list of my legal and non-legal experience and the transferable skills I gained from each one.

When I was notified of the members of my interview panel, I researched into their backgrounds at LA.

I also broadened my general awareness of global events at the time, one of which was the economic fallout from the pandemic impacting the legal world. I based some of my questions on the impact of the said pandemic on the firm.

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What's the best thing about training at LA?

The range of work you are exposed to, from day one I was brought into client meetings and have been encouraged to liaise with clients independently. The firm really cares about your development and growth as a trainee.

How would you describe the culture at LA?

LA has a friendly culture where all of the staff including the partners are very approachable.

The trainees also meet up informally on occasion and support one another. It is also a useful insight to speak to the trainee who was in your seat prior to you, as they can often give tips on the general mechanics of the team.

What are the development opportunities like at LA?

The firm is invested in the development of their trainees. In the two months I have been a trainee, I have had various emails and opportunities to engage in training webinars and other learning opportunities.

The fact that so many current partners started their career at LA as trainees highlights the ethos and commitment of the firm towards its employees.

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

It is very useful to have some prior knowledge of the seat you are due to begin. Reading over LPC notes or conducting basic research into the area of law will be helpful.

Also, ask a lot of questions when you are unsure – not just to partners and other fee earners but also to paralegals and personal assistants who have usually been within that department for years and therefore have a plethora of knowledge they would be happy to share.

Find out more

If you're ready to start your law career, we've got great opportunities for graduates. The window for applying for a training contract with us commencing in 2026 closes on 17 May 2024. Apply here.

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