



AUTHOR / KEY CONTACT

# Interview with a Trainee Solicitor at Lester Aldridge – Phil Bourne



Phil Bourne is a first-year trainee solicitor at Lester Aldridge. In this interview, Phil shares his journey into law, the process of getting a training contract, tips for the interview and his experiences as a trainee solicitor so far.

## Please share with us your journey into law

I chose to pursue a career in law shortly after graduating from Cardiff University in the summer of 2017, where I studied a joint history and philosophy degree. I had been aware that law was a potential avenue for me, given that my favourite subject, history, offered numerous transferable skills.

Whilst considering my options after graduation, I decided to enrol on the Graduate Diploma in Law at Bournemouth University. It did not take long for me to realise I had made the right decision. I then completed the Legal Practice Course at Bournemouth University the next academic year.

## Tell us about your career/seats so far at LA

I sought out some legal work experience at LA shortly after starting the LPC. LA offered me to gain experience in their Real Estate Finance department, which I gladly accepted. I must have done something right as I was then offered a part-time job in the same department starting in February 2019 whilst I finished my LPC, which turned into a full-time position in June of that year. I applied for a training contract with LA twice in 2019 and 2020 and was successful on my second attempt.

My training contract commenced in September 2022, and I continued my development in the Lender Services team with expanded responsibilities and assisting other partners within the wider real estate teams. The Lender Services department predominantly works with national lenders across a large spectrum of Buy-To-Let and commercial properties.

I am currently in our LA Marine team for my second seat working in the shipping and logistics sector. We deal with a whole range of disputes at sea, including salvage claims, ship arrests and damaged cargo.

## How does the seat system work at LA?

Typically every trainee will experience four seats across the firm, with positions available in the Bournemouth, Southampton and London offices. The seat options can vary from time to time, but you can expect a variety of choices across the firm's specialities. Trainees will rank their preferences with the option to give supporting comments, and the firm will do their best to accommodate everyone.

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

I have grown quite attached to commercial property during my time at LA.

I recall being quite open-minded as to which avenue of law I wanted to qualify into and welcomed the opportunity to experience various areas – something I think the law industry does quite well with the training contract seats. I also quite enjoyed the criminal and tort case law.

On reflection, I did enjoy and engage more with the property and private client modules, so it makes sense that I expect to qualify into commercial property I think my interest in history ties quite well into the nature of property law.

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

Although I was an internal candidate, I was aware of LA's reputation both in the local area, nationally and globally in some cases. Not many firms in our area can boast the same level of reach that LA has.

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

I consider my experience was the key difference between my two training contract applications with LA. Whether that is a vacation scheme, placement year or paralegal experience, knowing and understanding the industry goes a long way to having a successful application.

I continued to build on my commercial awareness, but I don't think I fully understood what this meant until my second attempt. It is one thing to keep up to date with the news and happenings in the legal industry, but it is the ability to apply and appreciate the potential impacts of the work we do that is critical.

Both years I was asked to consider a 'new law' that I would implement if given the opportunity. My answer changed from a generic and aspirational response to a more carefully considered, less globally dramatic answer, yet still one that would bring a benefit to the industry. The key to these types of questions is to appreciate the reason behind the question. The firm was looking for an understanding of the industry, the law itself and its

shortcomings. They're not looking for an 'if I were King for the day' response.

At this point, I understood a good interview should feel more like a professional conversation than an interrogation. My interview was in the summer of 2020, so the impact of Covid on the business was a hot topic.

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

I would say the wide variety and extent of work available. LA attracts local, national and foreign clients, so trainees have exposure to work that would ordinarily be found in the City.

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

Despite being one of the largest firms in the area, the culture at LA is very tightly knit. All of the partners are approachable, and there is a lot of collaboration between the various departments.

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

Personal development is a big part of LA, and there is ample opportunity to do so. It goes to show how many of the associates and partners started their careers at LA and have worked their way upwards.

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

Your training contract is a special opportunity to experience and discover multiple areas of law – make sure to take advantage as best you can, as each six-month period will fly by. You may not get your first choice, but every seat will provide you with transferable skills that will make you a better solicitor.

Also, stay on top of your training diary!

## **Find out more**

Find out more about [training contracts at Lester Aldridge](#). The window for applying for training contracts starting in 2026 closes on 17th May 2023.