



Insight: What is it like to be a trainee solicitor?

In March 2019, Brooke Manning, Kirsten Adamson and Thomas Harrigan joined the firm to undertake their two-year training contract at Lester Aldridge.

Over the past 6 months they were each allocated a team to work in and are now moving on to their next seats within the firm. We caught up with the trainees to gain an insight into what their first seat has been like.

How did you prepare for your trainee solicitor interview?

T: I conducted general research into LA and gathered as much information as I could. I then highlighted reasons why the firm and particularly the training contract, would be a great fit for me. I also created a list of all hobbies/interests, work experience and job roles I had at the time. I then wrote next to each, what qualities and responsibilities they exemplified. By creating a pool like this, I was able to answer any questions asked in the interview, providing a relevant example, without preparing for and limiting myself to specific questions!

K: I researched the firm, the work that it had been involved with recently, and the practice areas that it specialises in. I found it invaluable to be able to show my understanding of what the firm stands for, and what its values and ambitions are.

I also spent time reviewing my C.V. and practising interview questions. It might sound silly, but you sometimes forget what you have done in your career or education, and the achievements and skills you have acquired from these!

B: I prepared a 'firm profile' which included a mixture of generic information about the firm, more focused information about the culture of the firm and the training and development opportunities available.

As I had previously interviewed for a paralegal role and training contract, I had some idea of the questions that I would be asked. Therefore, I prepared answers based on my experience working at the firm and other relevant experience in the industry and at University.

It is really important to see the interview experience as two-way, as I wanted to be sure that LA was still the right fit for me.

How have you found your first seat?

T: I have really enjoyed my time in the litigation and recoveries department – I had never thought of myself as a litigator, but perhaps I am! I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenging work, early responsibility and regular client contact. Above all, the friendly team and supportive atmosphere have allowed me to learn so much in such a short space of time.

K: My first seat has been Real Estate in the Bournemouth office. I had already worked in Real Estate as a paralegal in the Southampton office, prior to starting my training contract, which I think set me up quite well for my first seat. The level of responsibility has definitely increased as time has passed and the work has been incredibly varied. I have found this seat useful in building my knowledge and confidence.

B: My first seat has been in Care and has been very interesting and varied. This area of law is very niche and therefore there are limited precedents, so I was very much thrown in at the deep end! However, I received a lot of support from the team, from the Personal Assistant through to the Head of the Department.

I have been exposed to lots of direct client contact and have been able to run matters on my own, with the support and supervision of other team members. This has helped me to gain a deeper insight into the work that the team carries out and what each day would be like as an NQ in the team.

What seats are you most interested in?

T: My next seat is in the Residential Property team, located in the London office, which I am very excited for! Beyond that, I am interested in undertaking a seat in Corporate, Commercial Property and Property Litigation. However, I am open-minded to new opportunities, which a full-service firm such as LA can provide, and which not all trainees and other firms will have access to, such as undertaking a seat in the Marine Department.

K: My legal experience to date has consisted of debt recovery and real estate. Both of these were commercial, so I am keen to experience areas of law like private client or specialised areas such as marine.

B: I seem to be leaning towards seats in the Healthcare sector. My next seat is in Clinical Negligence and Community Care, which was my first choice on this rotation. Again, these are quite niche areas of law, so I am incredibly lucky that these are on offer to trainees at LA.

What were your worries about coming in as a trainee?

T: My biggest worry was making mistakes that would be detrimental to a matter I was working on. I was quickly reassured by those supervising me that, not only would they be reviewing my work regularly and providing me with ample support to prevent this from happening, but that mistakes as a trainee were normal, and it is how

trainees learn!

K: Not knowing anything! But your team support you, and you learn a lot.

B: It can be quite daunting and unsettling being a new team member every six months, especially if this includes moving between LA's three offices. LA has a buddy system for trainees to help with this transition. Each trainee is allocated a 'buddy' within the trainee cohort and also within the team for each seat rotation. There are therefore lots of people to turn to when you have silly questions. It also helps to know at least one friendly face when you are in a new office.

Have there been any social activities?

B: We have regular trainee feedback meetings with the executive board, including the Managing Partner. These are really good opportunities to give feedback about our experiences and suggest ways that the firm can improve the trainee experience. This is usually followed by a curry!

The trainees also organise and host Happy Hour on the first Friday of each month. This is firm-wide and hosted in our Bournemouth office.

I've also been to lots of team and trainee lunches and dinners throughout my first six months.

If you would like to learn more about training contracts at Lester Aldridge, visit our Graduate recruitment page [here](#). Follow us on Instagram @LA_Trainees to hear the latest from our trainees.