

Bekki Flood relates her experience as a Barlow Robbins LLP trainee

When you set out on your journey in pursuit of the 'golden' Training Contract, the natural tendency is to focus on whether you meet the high criteria law firms set for a Trainee Solicitor - academics, experience, commercial acumen, the list goes on. However, it is just as important, if not more important, to consider whether the law firms you are applying to meet your criteria for Training Contract providers. After all, this is going to be a two-way relationship over the next two years (if not longer).

After completing various work experience placements and working for 18 months as a Paralegal, I was confident that I knew what I wanted from my Training Contract provider - exposure to high level work, a genuine investment in my training, the opportunity to get involved in 'real' work and the all important work-life balance. I narrowed down my search accordingly which led me to apply to train with Barlow Robbins and I have not looked back since.

My first seat was spent in Residential Property based in the Woking office. I had been slightly apprehensive about this area of law after my study of Land Law at University and had all but written it off as being rather drab, but I couldn't have been more wrong! From day one I was given as much responsibility as I could handle/asked for - meeting with clients, reporting to clients on their purchases and drafting leases to name but a few tasks. I was actively encouraged to challenge myself and step outside my comfort zone. The time was taken to ensure that I actually understood what I was doing and equally importantly, why I was doing it. I didn't once feel like a burden to my colleagues but instead I was a respected and valued member of the team.

Based in the Woking office I shared an office with my Supervising Partner. Whilst this was somewhat daunting in that you feel fully exposed having to share the Partner's office - being privy to client conversations, meetings and discussions on technical points of law has taught me skills that will stay with me long after the completion of my Training Contract.

My second seat was spent in Employment, again based in the Woking office. The pace of the work, the nuances of litigation and the fact that you refer to cases actually studied at University quickly highlighted to me the stark contrast between the litigious and non-litigious areas of the law. Whilst a very different area of law to my first seat and sitting under the supervision of a different Partner, the respect for my opinions and commitment to my learning were very much still present.

My third and fourth seats were spent in Commercial Property, gaining experience in both the Guildford and Woking offices. Whilst my property knowledge gleaned from my first seat helped me in finding my feet in this new area, the pace of the work, expectations of clients (and your peers now that you are in your second year!) and need for practical thinking certainly kept me on my toes. However, the commitment to trainee development and true 'open door policy' allowed me challenge myself without ever feeling out of my depth. I can honestly say that I loved every minute of my training in these final seats, so much so that I have now qualified into the Commercial Property team in Woking (property is rather interesting after all!).

It's not all about the law though here at Barlow Robbins. The beauty of training here is that there are a variety of opportunities afforded to you as a trainee which allow you to bring more of your personality and skill-set to the table and contribute to life at the firm. Whether this is through joining one of the committees such as the CSR committee



(which I would highly recommend), participating in the Pancake Race, where I even managed to make it into the Surrey Advertiser, or exposing the likeness of your singing to that of a screeching cat by participating in the Christmas Carolling in Woking town centre, trainee participation in these activities is both highly encouraged and accommodated for by the firm.

I can honestly say that taking the time to consider what it was I wanted from a Training Contract provider has paid dividends and I cannot fault the training I received throughout my Training Contract. As a Newly Qualified Lawyer I am happy to say that I couldn't have been better equipped for life as an NQ and I am excited to see what the next few years has in store for me. I have Barlow Robbins to thank for that.