

Charlotte Ford relates her experience as a Barlow Robbins LLP trainee

Prior to starting my training contract I worked as a paralegal in the South West and London. My experiences gave me a good insight into the type of firm which would suit me and support my development. Whilst I enjoyed my time in London, I quickly learnt that being a regional lawyer does not mean you compromise on the quality of work or client and therefore decided to aim my research at mid-sized regional firms. I also wanted to train at a firm offering a full-service of expertise to give me a wide range of seat choice; this helped in narrowing my research. At that time, I had recently moved to the South East and Barlow Robbins stood out as a firm that offered specialist training and high levels of responsibility.

Dispute Resolution

Shortly before starting my training contract, HR informed me my first seat would be in the Dispute Resolution team. I already had some litigation experience and was excited to be given the opportunity to build upon this. During my time in the seat I had exposure to a range of litigious areas including commercial, contentious probate and property. From the outset I was treated as a valuable member of the team and was given interesting work from a range of lawyers enabling me to witness different working styles. During my seat I had direct contact with clients enabling me to build good working relations. As well as having a couple of small value claims of my own to progress, I was heavily involved in a significantly high-value case giving me exposure to technically complex legal and procedural issues. I attended a number of conferences with counsel and mediations as well as drafting substantive witness statements and pleadings. Overall, it was a very rewarding seat with great responsibility within the team; I was not stuck to a copier preparing bundles!



Clinical Negligence

I have recently commenced my second seat within the Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence department. This is an area associated with a lot of emotion as many clients have generally suffered as a result of medical malpractice. Whilst I can continue to build my litigation skills and knowledge, I will be learning a lot of medical terminology and be expected to work through medical records. I have already been involved in preparing a detailed schedule of loss for a client and liaising with the other side regarding cost budgets. My supervisor has a number of high-value complex files, but I also have designated 'trainee files' which I will be running under supervision. It is nice to be given your own files, but reassuring to know there is someone to turn to with questions when learning how to run a file.

Life as a trainee at Barlow Robbins

Outside of day to day work there are a number of ways to be involved at the firm. There is both a social and CSR committee and trainees are invited to marketing and networking events. There certainly isn't a 'seen and not heard' culture, nor a 'seen to be staying late' attitude. The firm encourages use of Twitter/LinkedIn and trainees are actively involved in preparing articles and website content. There is also support for trainees through a designated mentor scheme and mid/end of seat reviews. It has been clear to me from the outset that Barlow Robbins want to develop trainees across all skillsets, not just 'lawyering' and in a world where marketing and business management is important for a firm's success, learning to be a rounded lawyer is in my view the best way forward.