

A day in the life of David Whitworth, trainee, Payne Hicks Beach
Departments to date: Corporate, Citizenship and Immigration, Family
University: Warwick
Degree and class: History, First

9:00am: I log on to PHB's remote-working platform. When I need to be in the office I arrive at about this time too. Recently I have been going in more, because in the Family department (my current seat) court work and meetings with clients and counsel often require this. But today I am at home and have substituted the commute for a run in the local common.

I skim through emails that have come in since I logged off yesterday and have a look at my to-do list and calendar, adding any updates from the emails I have just seen.

9:15am: One of the emails this morning is from the QC representing our client in a new case. She acknowledges receipt of a document I had prepared, contrasting our position in relation to what the judge said at the preliminary hearing with the opposing barrister's own view. It was a forensic bit of work and it is satisfying, if a little daunting, to think it is now in the hands of a leading barrister who says it will be helpful as she builds our case.

9:20am: I turn my attention to a relatively urgent task that came my way yesterday. I am preparing the first draft of an application to court to change the parenting arrangements of a child whose parents have separated. I set out why our client needs to bring this issue to the court and the reasons for its urgency. It is great to have a go at something that will form an important part of the early stages of the case.

11:00am: My phone rings. It is a partner asking if I can help on one of the most significant cases in the department. We have a bit of a chat before discussing the matter. It has been very welcome that so many in the firm, including the partners, take the time to talk like this.

11:20am: The partner has followed up with an email with further details. I check the application form I had been working on before sending it to the associate and partner in the matter. I do not have anything else too pressing so I make a start on this new task, which is checking the law on some very interesting technical points to do with security for costs in financial remedy proceedings.

12:45pm: Following some online research, it has become apparent that I will need to get to the office tomorrow to check some hardcopy legal resources we have. As is protocol, I email the head of department to let her know I will be coming in the next day.

1:00pm: I stop for lunch. When we are in the office (and rules allowing) the trainees try and get lunch together. I am told this was a very regular occurrence prior to the pandemic. It is all the easier at this time of year due to the wonderful green spaces of Lincoln's Inn and Lincoln's Inn Fields that surround the office.

2:00pm: I have a video call with two senior associates to catch up on a very busy matter that is currently in the early stages of the court process. Over the next few days I will help compile

a file of psychiatrists who would be suitable to assess some of the parties in this fraught and strongly contested case about the future care of a child.

4:30pm: Early next week I will be attending a conference with counsel on a matter I have not been involved in before. I find time now to read some of the documents I have been sent as background.

6:00pm: I begin to wrap up for a prompt finish to the day. Usually I log off by 7:00pm, however when things are busier or there is something urgent, the occasional late night is needed.

6:30pm: One of my fellow trainees and I have a meeting with our mentee from Coram's Fields, a charity with whom PHB has a longstanding relationship. It has been a privilege to contribute to this young person's first steps in her career, offering our advice and perspective on starting out in law.