



Ellie Sanders

Ellie has been a clerk since 2018. She is part of a team responsible for the management and practice development of the junior barristers above 12 years' call. Ellie is a member of the Institute of Barristers' Clerks.

How did you become a clerk?

I would say I stumbled into clerking. After completing my undergraduate degree, I worked as a trainee accountant outside of London, but it wasn't especially fulfilling. I was introduced to Chambers by a family friend who is a senior female clerk and she offered me a weeks' work experience at her chambers. Before the week was over, I had gone for an interview at a different set of Chambers and was offered a junior clerk position. By joining chambers, I quickly went from working in an office with an all-female team, to a team which was largely male. Although the decision to become a clerk was quite sudden, I was ready for new challenges and knew straightaway that a career as a barristers' clerk would offer me this.

Supprises?

I was surprised by the unique environment of Chambers and the traditions of the Bar. Clerks are employed by members of chambers and an aspect of the clerking role I was surprised by was that it can sometimes be our responsibility to make important decisions on behalf of a barrister, whilst taking in to account the best interest of the clients. By doing this, you quickly form close working relationships with barristers, solicitors and clients as they put their trust in you to get the job done efficiently often within pressured time constraints.

Challenges?

The transition from junior clerk to practice manager was challenging. I am now more involved in the working lives of members and with more seniority comes greater responsibility, which I enjoy. Despite the pressures of my new position, it is a rewarding role being involved in members' practices and their development.

Day to day, I would say the biggest challenge is trying to prioritise tasks and responsibilities, the ability to manage your time efficiently to get the job done on time while not falling behind with my other work.

Favourite aspects of the role?

My favourite thing about my job is the diversity of the role. Every day is completely different to the next with a variety of issues and problems to solve. Although it can sometimes be a very stressful environment to work in, I am never bored as there is always a job to be done and it is usually an interesting one.

Since I started my clerking career, I have had the chance to work with more senior female colleagues and I hope to keep progressing to the reach the standards I have observed.



“As a clerk there are often conflicting demands on your time from different members of chambers, clients and colleagues which you must be able to efficiently manage to ensure all tasks required of you are completed.”

What is the biggest Challenge of being a clerk?

Getting the balance right and managing client expectations. We are here to provide a service to the Barristers and at times they look to us for direction. However, this direction may not be what they were expecting so we must ensure we are aware and considerate of their views etc.

We must also ensure that we manage client expectations appropriately, so they are happy with the service chambers has provided. This can sometimes be difficult if situations/ circumstances have changed from when the initial enquiry was made to receipt of instructions or if instructions are received which were unexpected.

Do you think clerking has changed since you started your career?

I don't think the basic principles of clerking have changed. Being a clerk is about ensuring you provide the best possible service to members and clients, providing clients with the best/most appropriate Counsel for their case and managing these relationships.

However, in recent years I think the nature of how we work has changed. Due to the advances in technology, remote working etc much more of our work is now done via e-mail and there is perhaps not as much face to face/telephone contact. There is also much more of a focus on business development and ensuring chambers provides the highest standard of service. In a competitive market these things stand out and can make a difference.

What do you enjoy most about being a clerk?

There are many aspects which I enjoy, however, one of the most rewarding is seeing a barristers practice develop. Many meetings, time and effort go into making sure a barristers practice moves in the direction they wish, and it is rewarding seeing the results of your efforts as they become more senior.