

# EXCHANGE

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## CHAMBERS

I recently spent two weeks shadowing Imogen Nichol, a fellow common law pupil who is currently in her second six. This was a great opportunity to get an insight into the kinds of work I will be doing when, in a few short months, I too am on my feet.

Trials arising from road traffic accidents are a big part of a junior personal injury barrister's "bread and butter". I observed several small claims trials and one fast track trial during my two weeks with Imogen, and picked up a number of learning points.

First, given how busy most County Court lists are, speed and efficiency are key when questioning witnesses and making closing submissions. The more time spent in preparation, sifting through the documents and identifying the key issues, the more efficient counsel can then be in court.

Second, even though the client may not have a direct financial stake in a small claim against an insured driver, it is still vital to deliver a high standard of client care. Time spent in conference with the client before and after the hearing ensures they understand the proceedings and do not suffer unnecessary anxiety when going through the undeniably stressful process of the hearing itself.

Third, it pays to be prepared when the question of damages and costs arises at the end of the trial. It is often necessary to make quick calculations on the hoof, including making adjustments to the rate of interest sought on an award of damages. An Excel spreadsheet and an interest calculator are well worth having to hand.

I also observed an infant approval hearing during my time with Imogen. These hearings are required where an award of damages has been agreed between the parties, but the court's approval is required because the claimant is under 18. The child in question usually attends court, accompanied by a parent or guardian. Whilst the hearing itself is relatively straightforward, the court needs a range of paperwork in order to make the necessary order, so once again it's vital to ensure one turns up fully prepared.

Following my fortnight's shadowing in the County Court, I observed Louis Browne KC in a week-long inquest in which he represented the family of a young lady who sadly died of cancer following admitted failings in her treatment by an NHS Trust. The husband of the deceased was permitted to read out a statement at the end of the evidence, which was very moving. It brought home to me, once again, the importance of inquest proceedings for bereaved families in their search for answers about the death of a loved one. The dignity with which the family participated in proceedings throughout the week was hugely impressive.

Finally, I have enjoyed several days of advocacy training this month. I attended an internal chambers training day for common law pupils led by Matthew Stockwell and Alex Williams, who very kindly gave up their time to run us through an advocacy exercise. I also attended an assessed advocacy training course run by the Northern Circuit as part of my pupillage. My fellow pupils and I were trained by a large number of senior practitioners, including silks, who provided tailored and useful feedback to us all. Both courses illustrate the importance that continues to be attached to the tradition of "the Bar training the Bar".

With Christmas on the horizon, I am looking forward to a short break over the festive period before commencing the second half of my first six.