

A Day in the Life of a Bench Chair

A Bench Chair writes about their experience in the role below.

Staying connected

I have sadly become quite attached to my computer with the result that I check my in-box before leaving home in spite of my newest toy... an iPhone. No dramas on the judicial front or nothing that can't wait.

Meeting other Bench Chairs

Set off for Rose Court for a meeting of London Bench Chairs and took my usual route across the wobbly Millennium Bridge avoiding the numerous school parties taking loads of photographs. Due to new security measures it was a slow entry to our meeting but, once installed with Bench Chairs from all the London courts, we were away! We were due to learn of the changes that would ensue following the election but no new information was ready for us so a day was set aside in July to deal with the future of the courts service in London and we dealt with current events.

Looking back

I left this meeting early in order to attend a lunch given back in my court for the retired magistrates on the supplemental list (for inactive or retired magistrates). This is always an excellent event as magistrates are good at chatting and catching up with old friends over a glass of wine. I enjoyed some fruit juice, as I gave the assembled company an account of life in our court over the previous 6 months and I did not want to mix up my stories! On this occasion, one of my colleagues was sitting for the last time before retiring from the Bench so we spent time together reminiscing over the many years that he had been on the Bench and he will now attend the supplemental lunch in November. Before leaving for home, I had an informal meeting with our Deputy Justice's Clerk catching up with all the news: good and less good.

Training

I am always so grateful for the training that I had before taking up this challenging role. Madingley (where the Judicial Studies Board trains new Bench Chairs) was great in many ways; excellent tutoring given professionally and with some necessary humour, and the opportunity to meet magistrates from around the country who were embarking on the same work. The preparation for this enormous and responsible task was so thorough that I have been able to deal with almost everything that arises... sometimes too frequently!

Back online

Back home to read the emails, answer the phone calls which are a mixture of work and leisure. By the end of the day I can relax and be thankful that I have managed to retain a good sense of humour while carrying out the varied activities of today.