

Chambers: more than a business, it's family

A tribute to a special model: the difference it makes when you realise you work with a group of over 60 individuals who care about each other



Author
Cliff Alderson

The continued support I have received has made me realise, even more than I did already, just how special and different working in a set of chambers can be.



About the author
Cliff Alderson is Senior Clerk at Lamb Chambers.

Easter Bank Holiday 2013: my life changed forever. My two-year-old daughter had had a brain scan at our local hospital due to constant sickness, always being asleep, falling over when she was walking and finally not being able to walk at all. Following the MRI we were rushed to Great Ormond Street Hospital in an ambulance. My wife and I were taken into a room and told what no parent wants to hear: 'Your daughter has a brain tumour.' I cannot describe the feeling and emotion that rushes through your body when you are given news like this.

Our oncologist set out the first chemotherapy protocol which would take 18 months. When you have a seriously ill child, one of the thoughts that goes through your head is, how can I juggle work with being there for my family?

A lot of people may think it is a given that any business or organisation should let people take time out to be there for loved ones during tough times. Unfortunately, this is not always so. However, in my case, I have been completely overwhelmed by the compassion and support my chambers has given me and my family over the past six years of ongoing treatment that my daughter has been through.

Not a day goes by when a member of chambers or staff doesn't ask how my daughter is doing. They have let me be at all important hospital appointments and treatment days. After a day of chemotherapy, which was draining for us all, I was allowed to work from home. And when my daughter relapsed for a third time, chambers allowed me to work a four-day week.

This obviously put added pressure on my

fellow clerks. Not once did they complain. We have a fantastic, close-knit team and I will be eternally grateful for the support each member of staff has given me and the way they stepped in to cover my work.

Knowing that you have full support and flexibility from chambers can make a situation such as mine a lot less stressful. Having a sick child is hard enough; if you work for a business or organisation that does not take people's wellbeing seriously, it will make an already stressful situation far worse. It doesn't take much from a business to make a huge difference to people's personal situations; just some understanding and flexibility.

At the end of 2018 the Senior Clerk job became vacant in chambers. I had been with chambers for 15 years, gradually working my way up the ranks. I knew I could do the job and had what it takes to push chambers to the next level, so I applied. Bearing in mind my personal situation chambers could have easily overlooked me. Yet in January 2019 I was appointed Senior Clerk of chambers. Equal opportunity is not taken lightly here.

Six years down the line my daughter is currently on a medical trial, which within three months has dissolved her tumour and she is in the strongest position medically since the start of her journey.

The continued support I have received has made me realise, even more than I did already, just how special and different working in a set of chambers can be.

Yes, we all want to succeed and do the best we can in our market but I honestly believe we work in an environment which is more than just a business. It's more like family. ●