

Sean O'Brien - Barrister at St Philips Chambers

8.00am

Arrive at Chambers and make sure everything is in order for this morning's preliminary hearing at the Birmingham Employment Tribunal – is the Claimant disabled within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act? I got the papers yesterday and have already prepared a skeleton argument but am printing off enough copies of the authorities for my opponent and a full tribunal.

9.00am

I meet with the client in the Coffee Republic next to Phoenix House, where the ET is located. I spot at least 4 other parties likely to be going to the Tribunal, and wonder for the 100th time what the café's profits would be like should industrial relations take a turn for the better! The client has finished his coffee so we head straight over – conference rooms are at a premium so it pays to get there early.

10.00am

The hour prior to the hearing was the first time I have met the client, so I have used the time to put him at his ease, as well as making sure I understand the finer points of the case. This time we're not on the float list and so are sure to be heard at the allotted time. Floaters can often not be heard until after lunch, with the attendant danger (and expense) of going part-heard.

12.00 noon

The evidence has been heard and submissions given. We return to the waiting room to wait for the result.

12.30pm

We get the result we want – the Claimant is disabled within the meaning of the Act. A timetable is set for future progress of the case and for hearing the substantive issues.

1.00pm

I check in with Chambers to let them know that my case did not spill over into the afternoon. The criminal team phone me back – they have a matter in the Birmingham Magistrates' Court they need a prosecutor for at 2pm – breach of a Community Order.

1.15pm

Grab a sandwich and read the brief. It seems straightforward – the issue is whether the defendant can produce medical evidence for failing to attend a supervision appointment. Go to court for 1.30pm.

3.00pm

Speak to defence solicitor whilst waiting for turn on the list. There will be no medical evidence forthcoming and the Defendant is changing his plea. On the basis of the Probation Service recommendations I present to the Court, the defendant receives 40 hours' extra unpaid work.

5.00pm

Papers come in for an application in the county court tomorrow – opposing an application to set aside summary judgment in a commercial case. The brief has also landed for a 5-day tribunal for next week (2 lever-arch files!). I prepare the application and leave for home. The 2-lever-arch brief I can make a start on during the train journey home. I'm sure it will also make good bed-time reading!