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## Introduction

BCLP is able to provide witness familiarisation programmes for clients who may have questions or be anxious about appearing as witnesses in **any legal setting**, including courts, arbitrations, tribunals, inquiries and committees. The programmes are provided by **Mukul Chawla KC** and are designed to focus upon the witness's own personal characteristics and provide concrete methods of improving the quality of the witness's evidence and, in the process, provide reassurance to those who are nervous about what they may be about to face when giving evidence.

The programmes available are for durations of 1, 2 or 3 hours. The 1 and 2 hour sessions are designed to be one-to-one sessions and delivered in a completely interactive way to encourage the positive engagement of the witness.

The 3 hour session, while remaining interactive, can accommodate up to 3 witnesses. All of the sessions can be conducted in person or remotely through video conferencing. As such, the training is provided to witnesses wherever they are located and assist in preparing for legal proceedings in different jurisdictions. The training caters for both witnesses of fact and expert witnesses, although there are obviously some differences between the approaches of factual and expert witnesses. The 3 hour session is therefore not suitable for a combination of both factual and expert witnesses.

It should be stressed that this is training in how to give evidence rather than any form of coaching on what evidence to give or not to give. The training is provided independently of the legal advisors who have conduct of the case.

## The Training

The Witness Familiarisation Training programme has three component parts.

### Part 1

Initially, the training focusses on **identifying individual characteristics of the witness**, including:

- How does a witness speak? Slowly or quickly?
- How garrulous, taciturn, confident, or lacking in confidence is the witness?
- Does the witness answer questions directly or not?

This part of the session involves a dialogue between the trainer and the witness, which then informs the second and critical part of the training.

## Part 2

The second part of the training **addresses individual characteristics of the witness**. Witnesses are shown how to:

- harness those characteristics so that they are neither over nor under-confident;
- answer questions in a straight-forward way; and
- deal with the various techniques that are used by advocates to identify any perceived weakness.

The training is positive and addresses how the presentation of evidence can be radically improved rather than the more unhelpful “Don’t do this” methodology. The objective is to ensure that the witness is able to **give the best account of her/him/themselves**. Also included in this part of the session will be answers to the most basic questions, as well as more nuanced issues about commenting on documents to which the witness was not a party, the risks of waiving privilege, the critical difference between fact and argument, and whether expressions of opinion are permissible.

## Part 3

Finally, the training **provides familiarity with the tribunal**, including:

- the layout of the court or tribunal room;
- how to address the tribunal;
- giving evidence from a remote location; and
- the challenges of remote hearings.

Where appropriate, this can also cover the key differences between the tribunal in question compared with any other tribunal (and/or jurisdiction) with which the witness may be more familiar.

A key aim of the programme is to **provide witnesses with an understanding of the parameters for giving evidence, including the purpose of examination in chief, cross-examination and re-examination**. This will sometimes include correcting common misunderstandings around exactly what the role of the witness is and how it relates to the role of the advocates and the tribunal.

For cases that are particularly document heavy, the training can be tailored to focus on how the witness can best prepare for giving evidence at trial using a trial bundle or witness pack (including electronic bundles), and what is expected of them as regards the documentary evidence that will be available when they give evidence.

## Experience

Mukul was called to the Bar in 1983 and was appointed as King’s Counsel (taking Silk) in 2001. He became an accredited Mediator in 2007. Before joining BCLP in 2018 as a Partner and head of the White Collar Crime team, he was Head of Chambers of a leading criminal barristers’ chambers in London. In January 2022, Mukul returned to practice at the Bar but retains a formal connection to BCLP and now provides his services to clients of BCLP as a Consultant.

During his career, Mukul has examined and cross-examined thousands of witnesses and has appeared across a variety of courts and tribunals. In addition to his significant experience in the criminal courts, he also has wide-ranging experience of examining and cross-examining witnesses in the civil courts, international arbitrations, professional disciplinary tribunals and inquests and public enquiries. A number of these witnesses have given evidence for periods lasting up to twenty days.

Throughout his professional life Mukul has, as part of his role as an advocate, advised his clients on how they should prepare themselves for providing information in interviews (including as a suspect), giving evidence in court and how they should present their evidence so that it is most readily understood and favourably received by the tribunal.

Mukul has witnessed how the anxieties and pressures of being a witness in any contested proceedings can seriously affect the quality of the witness’s evidence, thereby adversely impacting the weight that the tribunal is able, or willing, to attach to that evidence. By advising on both procedural issues and focussing on techniques to combat anxiety and pressure, many of those problem areas can be ameliorated or even extinguished.

Since 1998, Mukul has been an advocacy trainer for The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn (he was Master of Advocacy in 2014 to 2015) and, more recently for the Inns of Court College of Advocacy and the American Inns of Court. He has trained advocates in England and Wales, Trinidad and Tobago, Jersey, the Bahamas, South Africa, Dubai and the United States (Philadelphia, Chicago, Miami and Washington DC).

Effective advocacy training requires detailed attention to the dynamic between the advocate and the witness. The advocate is trained to exploit features of the witness's evidence as well as attitude and general demeanour. Conversely, any witness should understand how the advocate will seek to exploit those features, the methods that the advocate uses and how to present their evidence to best effect.

It is a demonstration of these techniques and the ways in which they can be addressed that lies at the heart of the programme.

Mukul has garnered a huge amount of praise for his advocacy and client manner. In 2015, he was named at the Chambers and Partners awards as Crime Silk of the Year.

### Recent entries in the Legal Directories have included:



*"A delightful opponent and very able, he is very laid back and has a charming advocacy style, which is a real asset."*

*"A very able and persuasive advocate with great presence. He would instil complete confidence in any tribunal."*

*"He has a wonderful ability to deal with very large and complex matters and represent them brilliantly in front of the jury."*

*"A genuine heavyweight: he's calm, extremely bright and presents things in a really jury-friendly way."*

*"Terrifyingly bright, witty, articulate and charismatic."*

*"Excellent on paper and on his feet, he is widely revered as a 'powerhouse'."*

*"He's a very, very polished performer who has a nice understated style which appeals to both judges and juries."*

*"He is extremely hard-working and has a velvety smooth advocacy style that wins over judges and juries."*

*"He is a very effective advocate who is very charming and persuasive. He also has a good client manner."*

*"He is a brilliant advocate, extremely hard-working, thorough, has a delightful manner and is a complete all-rounder."*

*"Mukul Chawla KC's ability to navigate the complex areas that cases raise before a lay client and jury are unrivalled."*



### Feedback from training sessions conducted in the last year includes:



*"Good personalisation, as it was clear Mukul adjusted his comments based on my personality."*

*"Delivered simple messages which I could keep at the forefront of my mind during the evidence, but with depth of support behind them during the discussion."*

*"The training was extremely helpful when I was giving my evidence."*

*"Your session was very helpful with hands-on advice!"*

*"Thanks a lot for your time and efforts. It was very helpful."*

*"The training was informative, pragmatic, and personalized to my situation."*

*"It was a valuable use of time and helped put me at ease prior to my giving evidence."*

*"Thank you for the invaluable preparation."*

*"Thank you for all your counsel Mukul. It was much appreciated."*

*"You have been a great support and contributed tremendously to the success of the case."*



### Getting in touch

When you need a practical legal solution for your next business opportunity or challenge, please get in touch.

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