

Hi my name is Orla Crowe. I am a solicitor with Burn Wallace. I am nearly 11 years qualified now, and I work in the area of childcare, so we represent Tusla in proceedings in court.

I started out my career in commercial litigation at LK Shields, where I trained. I really enjoyed it, but I did a trip to Haiti for two weeks, volunteering over there. It was a few years after the earthquake, and it was just decimated there. We were helping to build houses, and I felt like that was not a good use of my skills, so I decided to come back to Ireland and work towards a career in human rights, focusing on something that I have expertise in. I then looked for jobs abroad in human rights.

I am now with Burn Wallace in the healthcare section, which is divided into two. One side represents the HSE, and we represent Tusla. The main part of my role is representing the state in childcare proceedings, so if children are being taken into care, I am the state's representative in those proceedings. My day-to-day work involves being in court all the time, five days a week, running various applications. We work with solicitors who represent the parents in the cases, solicitors who represent guardians ad litem, and we're constantly running the applications in court. Additionally, I advise social workers on various child protection matters, and I also advise on Children First and mandated persons' rights. It's very much court-based, which is quite unusual for a solicitor, but we do all our own court work. We don't really use barristers unless the case is extremely difficult, so we are the ones advocating in court every day.

The most interesting project I worked on was when I went to Malawi with Irish Rule of Law International, an NGO set up by the Law Society and Bar of Ireland. They have a project in Malawi, and at the time, there were four of us—all Irish lawyers—working there. We were seconded into various criminal justice sectors. I was in the DPP's office, focusing on homicide and sexual offense cases. I worked closely with the DPP, the Malawi police, and the judiciary, helping to coordinate matters. We were in the prison a lot, and it was a completely unique experience, really at the grassroots level. I felt like, as opposed to some of the other work I've done, this really made a difference on the ground, and I just loved that.

My most prized work achievement would be related to my work in Malawi. When we went over there, we visited every prison and created a database of everyone who was there, because a lot of times, the prisons themselves did not even know the names of the inmates. We went through and tried to determine the status of their cases. Some of them had been convicted and sentenced, but others had gone through their full trial, were found guilty, but were waiting for the judge to impose a sentence. Others were waiting for the judge to decide if they were guilty or innocent. Some of them had been waiting five, six, or seven years for that decision. We gathered the names of those awaiting judgment or sentencing and went to the judges involved to get them to deliver their judgments or sentences. While some still had time to serve, others had already

served their time, and some were found not guilty after being in prison for six or seven years, waiting for that verdict. Being able to move that process along for those prisoners was a huge achievement, and it really felt like we made a difference in those people's lives.