



ST JOHN'S  
BUILDINGS  
BARRISTERS CHAMBERS



# PUPILLAGE GUIDE

Welcome to St John's Buildings.

This brochure will guide you through all aspects of pupillage here, from why you should consider applying to us, to details about the process and case studies of past pupils.

We view Pupillage as a vital way of developing high calibre tenants who will ensure the continued success of St John's Buildings in the future.

We make a considerable investment in our pupils and most pupils become tenants. We hope you will consider applying to St John's Buildings and we look forward to finding out more about you.

Chris Ronan, Chief Executive





## WHO ARE WE?

We are one of the largest sets of barristers' Chambers in the UK, with 241 members and 69 support staff across four cities.

### DELIVERING EXCELLENCE

We have a proven reputation for providing expert barristers and delivering a complete legal solution. We build long-term partnerships with clients by providing exceptional counsel backed by professional, reliable and consistently high quality standards of service.

### FORWARD-THINKING

We are an early and enthusiastic adopter of new technology and AI to facilitate better and more cost-effective service delivery. Innovations include electronic booking, cloud storage, online diaries, remote access and automated billing. We invest heavily in our IT infrastructure and related technologies.

We have developed and employ award-winning electronic case collaboration software, which greatly improves client service while enabling a dramatic reduction of both our costs and our environmental footprint.

Already one of the largest Chambers in the country, we are following a strategy for growth to enhance our ability to service clients' needs by providing advocacy and advisory services nationally. This strategy is underpinned and enabled by our values of Service Excellence, Approachability, Community and Agility. These values define how we behave collectively and individually, to clients and to colleagues.

### OUR CLIENTS

Our clients are spread nationally and range from the full spectrum of legal firms, insurance firms, local authorities and high-net-worth individuals through to commercial enterprises and SMEs.

### PUBLIC ACCESS

Members of Chambers accept instructions from members of the public under the direct access rules, and we are developing and marketing this area as a key new business stream.

# OUR PRACTICE AREAS

Our Chambers offers a wide range of services and each barrister belongs to at least one of our practice groups.

One of our greatest strengths is that each individual barrister benefits from being part of a cohesive team within a large, multidisciplinary set of Chambers. This means that we can offer expertise and experience in a wide range of areas, with each area complementing and informing others. It also means that we are able to consider pupillage applications in each of our specialist areas.

Accidents Abroad	ADR and Mediation	Banking, Finance and Insolvency
Catastrophic Injury	Clinical Negligence	Company and Commercial
Costs	Court of Protection	Courts Martial and Service Law
Crime	Data and Information Law	Disease
Education	Employment	Family - Children
Family - Finance	Fraud - Civil	Fraud - Criminal
Inquests	Personal Injury	Professional Negligence
Property and Private Client	Public Access	Public /Administrative
Regulatory	Sports, Media and Entertainment Law	Tax

# OUR VALUES



## SERVICE EXCELLENCE

We are proud to have been recognised as Chambers of the Year on numerous occasions and continue to apply the same high standards across all sites. Our barristers and staff are committed to delivering high-quality services and support to all of our clients. We don't rest on our laurels, but continuously seek to improve our services.



## APPROACHABILITY

Our clients say we are friendly and approachable. We provide a supportive service and environment to clients, members and colleagues. We are always exploring ways to ensure our services are accessible and welcome Direct Access clients.



## COMMUNITY

Our barristers and staff work together to provide a seamless service to clients. Our barristers enjoy collegiate support across practice groups and sites, sharing their expertise to develop others. Welfare is high on the agenda in Chambers and we have been recognised for our work in this area by the Bar Council. Equality, diversity and inclusion are critical to Chambers' success, both as a workplace and service provider.



## AGILITY

Forward thinking - we scan the horizon and talk with market leaders about technical opportunities to enhance our services. We continue to adapt to market needs and challenges to ensure continuity and to provide the services our clients want and need. We embrace new technology enabling our barristers to work anywhere in the UK and radically reducing our use of paper.





## DIVERSITY IN PUPILLAGE

### BRIDGING THE BAR

Chambers is proud to have signed up to the Bridging the Bar Mini Pupillage scheme. Bridging the Bar is a charity committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity at the Bar. The organisation has three objectives:

- **Equal access to opportunity:** An integral part of this is enabling students from non-traditional backgrounds to gain practical work experience with barristers through a structured mini pupillage programme
- **Mentorship:** By connecting a diverse pool of students with dedicated mentors, the aim is to make the Bar a more accessible and better understood profession
- **Transparency:** BTB directories are a point of reference which serves to highlight those chambers and organisations which are leading the way towards equal access to opportunity.

Find out more by visiting [bridgingthebar.org](https://bridgingthebar.org)

### EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

We are strongly committed to equality of opportunity and will apply objective criteria in all shortlisting and selection processes. We aim to ensure there is no discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, disability, race, nationality, ethnic origin, colour, religion or belief, class or age in recruitment and working at Chambers. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to accommodate candidates with a disability. We particularly welcome applications from black and minority ethnic candidates, transgender candidates and those with a disability, who are under-represented in our membership.

### EQUALITY POLICY

Chambers is committed to equal opportunities in all aspects of its work. All Barristers have committed to observe the Bar Council Conduct in relation to non discrimination in the acceptance of work, the carrying out of that work and all dealing with clients, colleagues, staff and others. All staff have committed to comply with this policy.



# WHY APPLY FOR PUPILLAGE AT SJB?

## WHY CHOOSE SJB?

- We are a friendly, efficient set, based in four great northern cities
- We have a proven reputation for the quality of our advocacy
- We have an ambitious strategy focused on continued growth across all practice groups
- We have a clear focus on business development
- We provide a supportive environment in which pupils can flourish and learn
- Our pupils are sought after and very busy
- Our pupils are in court 95% of the available working days
- We offer a rich and diverse training package in a professional and friendly environment.

## WHAT DO WE OFFER?

During the first six months of pupillage a grant of £15,000 is made to all pupils and during the second six months there is an earning guarantee of £25,000. Most importantly for any applicant with real aspirations, we offer pupillage with a view to tenancy. That gives you the opportunity to be part of one of the biggest and most diverse sets of Chambers in the country.

## YOUR PUPIL SUPERVISOR

We are deliberately flexible as to who is the best pupil supervisor for any particular intake. The Management Committee decides the number and practice areas of pupillages to be offered for the coming year and invites suitable members of Chambers to be pupil supervisors.

The members are selected on the basis of the quality of their practice, their ability to provide guidance and support and their ability to relate to others.

Our pupil supervisors will be familiar with and act in accordance with The Bar Standards Handbook. They will ensure to the best of their ability that any pupil receives experience, instruction and advice in accordance with the appropriate pupillage checklist and they will use their best endeavours to introduce pupils to colleagues and professional clients.



## STRUCTURE OF PUPILLAGE AT SJB

The one-year training period is split into two halves. The first six months give you a chance to learn about the Bar and life in Chambers as well as your specialist chosen area of law, under close supervision from a pupil supervisor, who is a specialist in that field. This will include working on cases with your supervisor and learning from them. The second six-month period will see you owning and carrying out advocacy on cases and representing clients with close supervision from your pupil supervisor.

Your progress will be monitored on a continuing basis through the whole of the pupillage by your pupil supervisor.

We offer monthly review meetings with the chief executive, to ensure that you feel that you are getting the most out of your pupillage.

Formal monitoring will take place every three months, so that you and your pupil supervisor can assess your progress by reference to a pupillage checklist so as to:

- Identify which areas of work have been covered;
- Identify which areas of work remain to be covered and discuss how this will be achieved;
- Give you and your supervisor an opportunity to comment in writing generally on all or any matter relating to the conduct of your pupillage.

This way we can ensure that you get the best training possible.

Towards the end of the second six months of the pupillage period, the Pupillage Committee will meet with the pupil supervisor and the Head of Chambers to review your progress.



# PUPILLAGE GATEWAY

## APPLYING

### OUR CRITERIA

We are looking for commitment, passion, intelligence and drive. We expect candidates to have at least AAB at A-level (or equivalent) and a minimum 2:1 degree, although we will take into account exceptional circumstances. We also look for:

- Intellectual and analytical ability
- Written communication and advocacy
- Oral communication and advocacy
- Understanding of the law and legal practice
- Demonstration of attributes required to support a successful career at the Bar.

### WILL A MINI-PUPILLAGE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

We recommend that applicants for pupillage should try to complete a mini-pupillage in Chambers. Mini-pupillages are a great way for Chambers to get to know the applicants but also for the applicants to get to know Chambers. The fact that a mini-pupillage has not been completed will not be held against any applicant who is otherwise perfect for Chambers, but applicants who have not completed a mini-pupillage may be requested to undertake a mini-pupillage before a decision is made. If you are interested in a mini-pupillage please visit

<http://stjohnsbldings.com/join-us/pupillage>





# TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM, FROM OUR PUPILLAGE COMMITTEE

The tips below aim to help you give your application the best chance of making it through the “sift” – the process whereby hundreds of applications are whittled down to those offered a first interview.

1. Remember that the person reading your application will be reading a lot of others. You need to make your points quickly and for the application to stand out. A well-edited application will have better impact than a very lengthy one.

2. The academic section needs to align with Chamber’s requirements. Make sure it is and if not highlight why not and detail any extenuating circumstances where requested in the form.

3. Make sure everything is grammatically correct. We are looking to assess your written communication skills across the form and in later questions you have an opportunity to demonstrate your written advocacy. A reader may be put off or misunderstand your intent if for example apostrophes are out of place or there is misspelling and incorrect use of commas.

4. Mini-pupillages are helpful. However, an extensive list in your application form is less so and we recognise that not all candidates can spare paid working days to attend so many or experience equal access to them. We suggest selecting no more than four and for each only give a succinct two or three sentence description of what you did or saw during it. Similarly, with marshalling.

5. Legal work experience: You may have full or part-time legal work experience, e.g. in a solicitor’s office or using legal skills in other commercial environments. Increasingly, pupillage applications are from people who are not coming straight from the Bar Vocational Course and indeed have already started working in the legal sector. Keep this separate, if you have it, from voluntary legal experience (Free Representation Unit, Citizen’s Advice Bureau etc) when presenting in the form.

6. Again, for this employed legal work good editing is essential. Highlight the number of cases you have advocated in, what areas of law you have started to practise in and notable successes. Remember, barristers are advocates, so the more advocacy experience you can show the better.



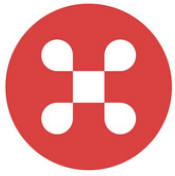
# TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM (CONTINUED)

7. Non-legal work experience: This can help demonstrate your work ethic and other useful attributes for the Bar. However, don't gild the lily or spend a lot of words telling us what is obvious about the role. Highlight transferrable skills and knowledge.

8. The questions at the end of the form are set by each Chambers. These are an opportunity to demonstrate your written communication and advocacy skills, knowledge and critical reasoning. Our tips for completing these are:

- Answer all elements of the question, including offering your opinion/evaluation where requested. For example, last year when asked about whether the independent referral Bar is likely to exist in the future, some applicants described only the threats to the Bar without providing an evaluation of those threats and whether they would or would not cause it to diminish or disappear.
- Using key phrases from the question in your answer can keep you on course to answer the question and help the reader see you are doing so.
- Answer each of the questions using two or three paragraphs at most. One single block of text can be a bit off-putting for the reader.
- Avoid humour, it rarely works. But do try to engage the reader with answers that are genuinely interesting to read and stand out.
- If the Chambers has a particular unique selling point or attracts you for a particular reason, mention it.

We hope this has been helpful and wish you good luck in all your future applications.



## CASE STUDIES

### Navpreeth Gihair Pupil 2017, Tenant 2018



I commenced a Common Law pupillage in October 2017, based in Chester.

During my first six I was assigned a pupil supervisor whose main practice area was criminal law. He was incredibly welcoming and supportive throughout the process - and is still on hand should I need anything.

Everyone I encountered in my first six was incredibly welcoming. Chambers ensured I was supported not only by the Chester site, but that I also extended my network across the other sites too. I had the opportunity to visit all of St John's Buildings' offices, and to meet with other members of Chambers, the staff and clerks. Despite my worries about being the newcomer, it quickly became apparent how friendly and open everyone is, and I settled in easily.

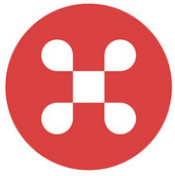
I was set weekly written work and shadowed members of Chambers on a daily basis. I was encouraged to give my opinion on the issues in each case, which laid the foundations for my own case preparation.

I was in court every day during my second six, which seemed intense at first glance, but in reality I was able to build up my confidence and start progressing to more complex cases over the course of the six months.

I was continually supported by the clerks, my supervisor and members of Chambers. There was no question too silly, or no time of day (or night) where I didn't have someone to turn to for support. I also met with my senior clerk on a monthly basis to provide feedback on how my experience was going.

Overall, I had a very positive and supportive pupillage experience with St John's Buildings.





## CASE STUDIES

### Sean Batterton Pupil 2017, Tenant 2018



I undertook Pupillage in Liverpool from 2017-2018. My pupillage and first year of practice focused on crime, but during my second year I moved fields under the guidance and support of our chief executive and senior clerks.

My experience of St John's Buildings has been nothing but positive. Chambers is a busy and friendly place to work. Whether it's having a quick chat in the clerks' room or sitting down and discussing a case with another member of Chambers, people are always interested in you and making sure that your experience as a pupil is as constructive and enjoyable as possible. Chambers and the clerks use their significant experience to guide your development.

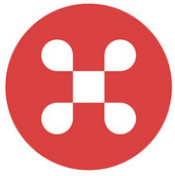
During your pupillage you will work closely with your pupil supervisor and other members of their practice group. You will be exposed to some of the most complicated disputes, you will be expected to assist your pupil supervisor by completing research and undertaking drafting. Most importantly, you will be expected to bring your own ideas to discussions. You will have monthly meetings with your senior clerk which will focus on your experiences so far and will address any concerns that you have. You will work closely with the clerks in order to take ownership over your own development to ensure that you are able to see the work that you need to in order to successfully complete your pupillage.

Towards the end of your first six months you will be placed with more junior members of Chambers in order to experience the work that you will see during your early time in practice. You will be encouraged to join the Chambers WhatsApp groups which are active and people are always willing to help even with what may appear to you to be simple questions.

During your second six, the clerks will work closely with you to monitor the work that you are undertaking and to ensure that you are able to switch off and relax when you need it. St John's Buildings is acutely aware of the stresses on new pupils and they encourage you to use your holidays as we all need a break from time to time. One of the key benefits to members of St John's Buildings is the excellent library facilities on hand, we have access to all of the key practitioners' texts for your chosen field which helps you with your preparation and will save you a small fortune.

Outside of work Chambers has a lively social scene. During lockdown they held weekly quizzes and zoom catch ups, and the junior members of chambers regularly meet up to check in on each other. There is always someone on hand to talk to if you need to decompress after a particularly difficult hearing and everyone works to support each other.





## CASE STUDIES

### Kelly Hutchinson Pupil 2018, Tenant 2019



In October 2017, I was offered a common law pupillage at St John's Buildings in Sheffield, which I was delighted to accept.

#### FIRST SIX

I commenced first six in March 2018. On my first day, I received an induction whereby I was introduced to my pupil supervisor and familiarised with the Chambers policies, procedures, and IT systems. For around the first four months I spent almost every day in Court, observing senior members of Chambers in a variety of hearings. In final couple of months of first six I observed more junior members of chambers, so as to become accustomed to the nature of the work that I would be undertaking during second six. I was encouraged, by all members of chambers, to ask any questions I had about the hearings that I was observing. I was also given a range of paperwork to complete, which I was given feedback on. By the end of first six, I felt that I was well prepared for second six.

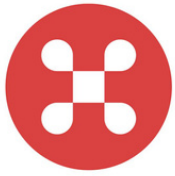
#### SECOND SIX

The clerks ensured that, from the outset, I was in Court almost every day. During the course of second six, the level of work increased gradually so I did not feel overwhelmed. I was encouraged to seek guidance from other members of Chambers in relation to any matters that I was unsure of.

I found other members of Chambers were easily contactable and willing to assist me in overcoming any issues. I therefore felt highly supported during second six.

#### GENERAL

I found Chambers extremely welcoming and friendly. I was invited to attend a number of social events, even during the early stages of pupillage. Throughout pupillage, I attended monthly meetings with my senior clerk to discuss the progress of my pupillage. If there were any types of hearing that I wished to observe (during first six) or undertake (during second six) the clerks would do their utmost to facilitate this. Chambers offers a wide pool of resources, to both pupils and tenants, to support and promote wellbeing. It was reiterated to me that Chambers offers pupillage with a view to tenancy, which removed the pressure of competing with co-pupils for tenancy. Pupils are also assured that taking annual leave will not impact negatively on the tenancy decision.



## CASE STUDIES

**Niamh Ross**

**Pupil 2016, Tenant 2017**



I joined St John's Buildings as a pupil in November 2016, specialising in family and criminal law. I had two hugely supportive and welcoming pupil supervisors, each highly experienced and well-respected in their respective practice areas.

### EXPERTISE

One of the key benefits of being part of a large, multidisciplinary set is the breadth of skill and expertise in Chambers. In first six, I spent time shadowing a number of practitioners across different practice areas and of varying levels of seniority. This allowed me to establish my own strengths and interests, and ensured that I had a well-rounded understanding of the legal system before I started on my feet. Whilst I have since chosen to practise exclusively in family law, having the opportunity to hone my advocacy skills at an early stage by conducting criminal trials in the Magistrates' Court in second six was invaluable. As a junior member of the family team, I continue to develop my skills and knowledge with the benefit of support and guidance from some of the very best family practitioners in the country here in Chambers.

### SUPPORT

From the first days of first six, through to the most challenging days of my practice so far, I have always felt well-supported in Chambers.

My pupil supervisors and many other members were very encouraging and approachable, and were always happy to discuss cases with me or to provide moral support after a challenging day. I was also included in social events by my colleagues at the junior end of Chambers as soon as I started pupillage. St John's Buildings has an excellent, supportive clerking team. During second six, my diary was managed carefully to achieve a challenging but manageable balance of work. I had regular reviews with my senior clerks who ensured that my practice was progressing appropriately.

### TECHNOLOGY

The software available in Chambers has allowed me to work effectively on an almost entirely paperless basis from the first days on my feet, which has not only been very convenient, but has allowed me to stay ahead of the curve as the Courts continue to move towards paperless working. I have benefitted from the technological expertise which the clerks and other barristers have shared.

Overall, whilst pupillage was a very challenging year with many steep learning curves, I feel that pupillage at St John's Buildings provided me with a strong foundation for a successful and rewarding career at the Bar. Since accepting tenancy, my practice has continued to develop well and I am confident that it will continue to do so at St John's Buildings.

# TIMETABLE

Date	Step	Did you know?
28 November 2022	Pupillages are advertised	Chambers is a member of the Bar Council's Pupillage Gateway scheme and our vacancies will be advertised there. Applicants will have access to an online practice application form to help you prepare.
4 January 2023	Application system opens	Chambers will not have access to applications yet.
8 February 2023 2pm	CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS	
16 February 2023	The applicants are sifted for the first time	Our pupillage committee is responsible for the sift. It is made up of at least three of our leading barristers as well as the CEO.
1 March 2023	Second sift	Following this, the committee meets to discuss the outcome and agree candidates.
24 March 2023	First Interviews	The first interview is a short and snappy interview, undertaken by members of the pupillage committee. Each interview lasts 15 minutes at the most, with a series of set questions to be answered by each candidate. We ask for references for everyone who is invited for interview. However, references will only be considered after the first interview has taken place and a preliminary view has been reached.
27 & 28 April 2023	Second interviews	Our second interview is designed to test your developing skills as a barrister and includes a role play element with a legal problem, which will be provided half an hour before the interview. The problem is designed to test your analytical and communication skills and not your legal knowledge of the subject matter. Second interviews are conducted by the pupillage committee.
5 May 2023	Offer letters sent from this date	Applicants have seven days to accept any offers made to them.
October 2022	PUPILLAGES COMMENCE!	