



# Pupillage Handbook

2025 / 2026



**Spire Barristers**

FAMILY & PUBLIC LAW SPECIALISTS

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**“SPIRE BARRISTERS IS A NOTABLE SET WITH PARTICULAR EXPERTISE IN ALL MATTERS RELATED TO CHILDREN, RANGING FROM PUBLIC TO PRIVATE CHILDREN LAW. ITS MEMBERS ARE RESPECTED FOR THEIR ADVICE IN HIGHLY SENSITIVE CASES SUCH AS THOSE INVOLVING SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE, FABRICATED AND INDUCED ILLNESSES AND CHILD REMOVALS. THE CASES OFTEN INVOLVE LENGTHY EVIDENCE AND MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS.”**

**CHAMBERS & PARTNERS  
UK BAR 2024**

## ABOUT CHAMBERS

Originally founded in Leeds in the 1930's with an established and excellent reputation throughout the North of England and beyond, for a responsive and professional approach to the provision of legal services; at the end of July 2017, 37 Park Square Chambers became Spire Barristers, the Circuit's and the North's only specialist Family and Public Law Chambers.

This decision was taken in response to and in recognition of Chambers' prominence, having one of the Circuit's most formidable and dynamic family teams and to enable Chambers to offer to both Professional Clients and Members of Chambers alike a focused and dedicated service, centred on excellence in the fields of Family and Public Law.

Spire Barristers offer a dynamic and forward-thinking approach, which is both specialist and personal to the needs of all our clients and barristers. What sets us apart is our genuine and caring ethos, together with our widely recognised desire to consistently exceed all expectations. It is easy to say, but this ethos is demonstrated time and again where our team approach and co-operative and collaborative spirit support colleagues and staff through a myriad of difficult situations.

### Location

Our modern, purpose designed Chambers, positioned on the developing and vibrant South Bank in Leeds City Centre, gives us easy access to the whole of the North Eastern Circuit and nationwide, by both road and rail; a prime location in which to develop a thriving practice.

**Legal500** **Chambers**  
AND PARTNERS

# OUR WORK

## Family Law

Spire Barristers are Family Law specialists who are approachable and place the client's needs and concerns at the heart of every case. We act for solicitors and Local Authorities and undertake Public Access and Pro Bono cases.

Our members have considerable experience and expertise in all aspects of Family Law, including:

**Public Law Children / Private Client / Private Law Children / ADR: Mediation and Arbitration / Matrimonial Finance / Injunctions / ADR / International Children**

We also have experience in **Wardship** and other **Inherent Jurisdiction** matters, as well as being well versed in **Forced Marriage Protection** applications and International **Child Abduction Cases**.

## Public Law

Members of the Public Law team at Spire Barristers have expertise in applications pursuant to the Mental Capacity Act 2005. We also regularly advise and provide representation in cases involving the overlap between Public Law Children cases and the Court of Protection as vulnerable young people make the transition into adulthood. Members of the team appear in the regional Court of Protection and High Court and regularly act on behalf of family members, Local Authorities and Health Professionals.

## Education Law

Education Law can encompass various disputes within education including:

- the need for and content of Education and Health Care Plans;
- school admissions;
- school transport; and
- cases before the SEND Tribunal

Members have a thorough understanding of the holistic needs of children with Special Educational Needs and the interface with the Children Act 1989 responsibilities.

# 10 REASONS TO CHOOSE SPIRE BARRISTERS

**#1 We are one of the 'go-to' sets for large, complex, challenging and high-profile child and adult protection cases.**

#2 Our clients praise our “down-to-earth, accessible approach coupled with us always achieving the best possible results.”

**#3 We are a forward-thinking, innovative set and the only specialist Family and Public law chambers in the North, and on the North-Eastern Circuit.**

#4 Continued investment in chambers, our members and our services to members. We have seen fee income growth of 12.5% in the last year.

**#5 We have become one of the largest dedicated, specialist Family and Public law teams in the region with six KCs , 38 juniors and two pupils with further recruitment of more specialist practitioners to our team planned.**

#6 We are the only barristers' chambers in Yorkshire solely led by women.

**#7 More than two-thirds (67.44%) of our barristers are women, almost twice the national average.**

#8 Through our support and commitment to the Legal Education Foundation and its Justice First Fellowship, we're at the heart of creating the next generation of social justice lawyers

**#9 We're passionate about social mobility in the legal & other professional fields We've established a charitable trust, The Spire Foundation, which fundraises and supports causes related to our specialist practice areas.**

#10 We celebrate the whole team. Our clerks regularly draw applause for their excellence from both clients and members alike. “Ordinary people. Extraordinary Barristers. Outstanding team.”



## **PUPILLAGE AT SPIRE BARRISTERS**

Find out what we look for in a Pupil, what to Expect from Pupilage at Spire Barristers and how to Apply.

## WHAT WE LOOK FOR

In recruiting pupils, in short, we are looking for our future tenants. We recruit pupils on the merit of their application, including relevant life experiences rather than simply focusing on academic achievement. We believe there is more to a good pupil than simply their undergraduate grades.

It is a requirement that on completion of the BTC you will have achieved a mark at least 70% at first sitting (e.g. 70 D 1). In addition we are looking for pupils who share our passion for our areas of practice and our chambers ethos.

Our application questions are carefully designed to enable candidates to demonstrate those characteristics that will make them exceptional Family and/or Public Law barristers, as well as identifying those who we can be confident will become the next generation within our unique chambers

We understand and appreciate that mini-pupillages during the academic stage of training is important. However, we want to see evidence, not just of the sheer volume you have enjoyed, of a more considered, targeted approach to gaining experience in the areas of law you want to practice in has been taken. We want to hear how your experiences have shaped your desire to practice in a particular area(s) of law and if it influenced your choice of chambers to apply to. This focused information will give us greater insight when considering your application.

In addition, successful candidates will have demonstrably good communication skills and a commitment to their development as an outstanding advocate, showing an ability to engage well with clients, members of chambers and clerks.

Additionally they demonstrate a desire to practice in our specialist areas of Family Law and Public Law and show commitment to the independent Bar throughout Leeds, Yorkshire and the North Eastern Circuit

### IN BRIEF

**BTC mark of at least 70% at first sitting (e.g. 70 D 1)**

Demonstrably good communication skills

**Commitment to develop as an outstanding advocate**

Desire to practice Family Law and/or Public Law

**Commitment to Leeds, Yorkshire and NE Circuit**



# WHAT TO EXPECT

During pupillage with Spire Barristers, pupils receive training that is second to none in all aspects of Family and Public Law. Chambers is at the forefront of training at the Bar with an ever expanding team of registered Pupil Supervisors.

Our bespoke Pupillage programme ensures a focused and in-depth training programme. Chambers can confidently say that at the end of pupillage, all pupils meet and likely exceed the competencies set out in the Bar Professional Statement.

The training and opportunities being offered are of the highest quality. Our pupils move seamlessly into tenancy with busy and successful practices; having been nurtured in a warm and welcoming chambers' environment.

Pupils are allocated one overall pupil supervisor and two mentors, whilst working with a broad range of practitioners, so that they can be assessed widely across chambers. Our dedicated and experienced clerking team provide exposure to instructing solicitors as well as full administrative support as they begin practice at the Bar.

## **In practical terms in 2025/2026 you will receive the following:**

- Pupillage Award above Bar Standards Board policy levels: £10,000\* for 1st Six and guaranteed earnings of at least £17,500 for the 2nd Six.
- No chambers charges during pupillage.
- All travel expenses to and from court (during 1st Six only).
- All compulsory courses for pupils arranged and funded by chambers.
- Full GDPR training and accreditation plus ICO registration.
- Membership of the FLBA, CoPBA and Lawyers for Children.
- IT and technical support inc. Office 365 and Adobe Acrobat Pro subscriptions.
- Access to and provision of stationery as required.
- Funding for courses of interest in practice areas.
- Full training in financial management and reporting from billing to fees.
- Access to Westlaw, Lexis Nexis and Bloomsbury Publishing's relevant titles.

**‘EXCELLENT FAMILY SET’ SPIRE BARRISTERS  
FIELDS A TEAM WELL KNOWN FOR ADVISING  
ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF COMPLEX PUBLIC  
AND PRIVATE CHILDREN LAW MATTERS.**

**‘THE CLERKS AT SPIRE BARRISTERS ARE  
SECOND TO NONE. THE CLERKS ARE  
ATTENTIVE AND ARE ALWAYS HAPPY TO  
ASSIST, PARTICULARLY JENNIFER, DONNA,  
SHANNON AND LEIGH.’**

**LEGAL 500 UK BAR 2025  
TOP TIER SET  
FAMILY: CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC ABUSE**



# TESTIMONIALS

Meet some of our former and current Family and Public Law pupils.



## **NIAMH BRENNAN**

**2024/2025 Pupil**

“As a prospective pupil, I feel the process can be somewhat daunting however I believe it becomes easier once you decide your area of law and where you wish to practice. I can honestly say that I have always wished to be a Family barrister and be at Spire Barristers.

Throughout the written application and the interview stages, I always felt Spire had a genuine interest in getting to know me, my skillset, thought processes and why I would make a good barrister. I felt that the interview was intellectually challenging yet strangely enjoyable. After being able to engage in discussion with the panel, I was left feeling that I was given the opportunity to display my best qualities. My lasting impression of Spire Barristers was how welcoming and warm everyone was and this has remained the case ever since.”



## **SARAH HUTCHINSON**

**2024/2025 Pupil**

“The pupillage application and interview process was challenging but I really felt that Spire was interested in and valued my previous experience. Receiving and accepting an offer of pupillage prior to completing the bar course is a unique experience. The knowledge that it was a conditional offer was stressful, but it definitely focused my studies and ensured that I was driven and determined to succeed.

A huge benefit was that I had the luxury of more time to study at a time when my course mates were balancing revision with the pressures of the pupillage application process. Immediately after receiving my pupillage offer, I felt supported and welcomed into Chambers. During my bar course year, I was invited to educational and social events and had as much contact with Chambers as I wanted or needed. This meant that I had the opportunity to meet most people, and it helped to quell my pre-pupillage nerves.”



**“The extensive guidance and tutelage I received throughout my pupillage allowed me to build confidence in facing more complex and challenging matters.”**



**LAUREN GARDNER**  
2022/2023 Pupil

“I had an amazing and busy first few months of pupillage. From the moment I received my offer, everyone at Spire Barristers was so welcoming and supportive. I was invited to events in the year between my offer and start date, which allowed me to meet most of the team and feel very at ease before I started on my first day.

After starting pupillage, I observed a variety of interesting family and public cases, from junior level to KC level, and I was actively involved in preparing hearings and documents. I felt like a valued member of the team from the moment I received my offer of Undergrad Pupillage, and I feel very lucky to have completed pupillage with such a kind and prestigious set. I couldn't recommend pupillage with Spire more.”

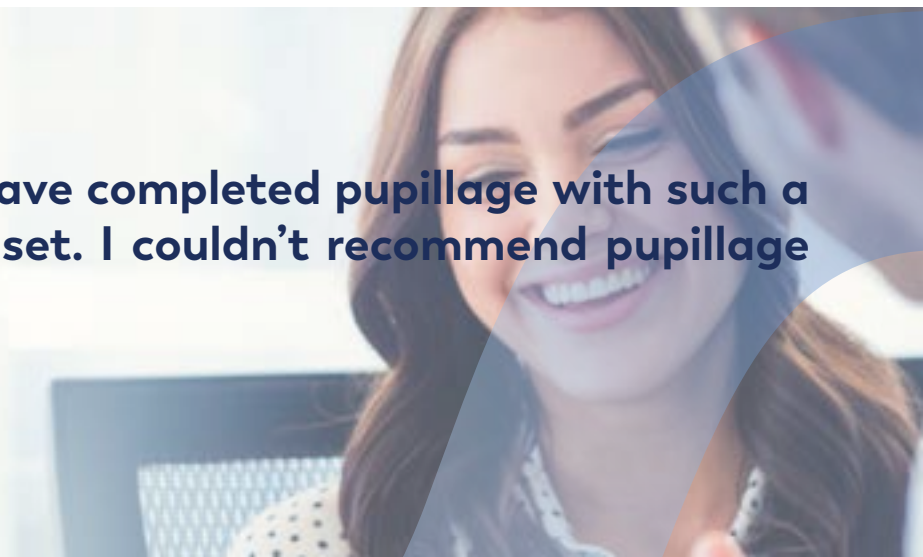


**ELEANOR SUTHERN**  
2022/2023 Pupil

“From the day I received my pupillage offer I felt welcomed and supported from all members of Spire Barristers. I was invited to events and was able to meet my supervisor prior to starting pupillage.

I started my pupillage in September 2022, and enjoyed every minute. My immediate pupillage ‘team’ consisted of my pupil supervisor and two mentors which is a great way to learn and feel supported. I played an active role by way of preparing documents in advance of, and after hearings. By working alongside barristers, both junior and senior, I was able to observe a variety of work from day one of my pupillage.”

**“I feel very lucky to have completed pupillage with such a kind and prestigious set. I couldn't recommend pupillage with Spire more.”**



# HOW TO APPLY

Pupillages are advertised through the Pupillage Gateway. Application for commencement of Pupillage in 2025 will be made through the Pupillage gateway. Applications for Pupillage in 2026 should be made directly to chambers using our own application form. This form will be made available on the chambers website at the start of the application window. Chambers application window and notification process follows the timetable set by the Gateway.

Currently we are offering:

- One 12 month pupillages are available for 2025/2026. and;
- One 12 month pupillage for 2026/2027.

Within the Gateway timetable (January to May each year) we recruit at least one pupil to commence in September the same year as recruitment and one pupil, **who is to commence the BTC in the September** of that year who will then commence pupillage in the September the following year.

## Mini Pupillage

Chambers offers 3 mini-pupillages per year, each of between 3 – 5 days duration, which take place in May, June and the first two weeks of July.

Applications are accepted between 01 September and 30 November for placements the following year. Candidates are invited to send their CV and covering letter to the Pupillage Committee at [pupillages@spirebarristers.co.uk](mailto:pupillages@spirebarristers.co.uk)

Selection takes place by January the following year and candidates will be notified shortly thereafter.



## CONTACT US



“Spire Barristers is a unique set of chambers, where all members, pupils and staff are encouraged and guided to be the best they can. We celebrate diversity and embrace our differences. Pupillage within #TeamSpire was developed and refined to ensure our principle of excellence is upheld, whilst providing an enjoyable, challenging and, we believe, inspiring twelve months. Ordinary People. Extraordinary Barristers. Exceptional Team, being the ultimate aim.”

Helal Ahmed and James Goodwin  
Directors of Pupillage

### **Pupillage Team**

Helal Ahmed, James Goodwin, Sharon Tappin,  
Marie Harbin, Chloe Lee, Gemma Carr, Aaqib Javed.

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Spire Barristers are proud to support Wellbeing at the Bar





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