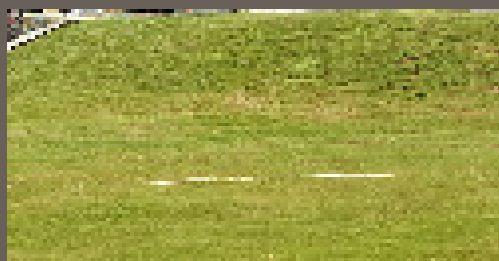




serle court

# pupillage

*Information for 2024 applicants*



*“Serle Court is a friendly, inclusive chambers which welcomes excellent advocates and thinkers from all backgrounds.”*

Elizabeth Jones KC  
**Head of Chambers**



At Serle Court, we regard the recruitment and training of pupils as being of the utmost importance. Our pupils are our future tenants, and we want to ensure that Serle Court can continue to provide excellent service to its clients. We welcome applicants from all backgrounds.

This brochure includes information for those who seek pupillage commencing in October 2025. We set out our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity, what we look for in applicants, how our pupillage application process works and what we offer. Some of our junior tenants also give an insight into their experience of pupillage with us.

If you have any further questions and would like to speak to someone, you can find contact details on the last page.

Zoe O'Sullivan KC  
**Chair of the Pupillage Committee**



## Who we are

Serle Court provides a wide range of services across the spectrum of commercial & chancery law, including civil fraud, commercial litigation, company, insolvency, international and offshore, partnership and LLPs, private client, trusts and probate, property, mediation and arbitration.

We are acknowledged as *'one of the very best commercial chancery sets, and one of the few that genuinely competes in both traditional chancery and commercial litigation.'* - Chambers and Partners.

We are recognised as one of the top sets at the English Bar, and currently comprise 75 barristers including 28 silks. Serle Court is regularly recognised in the legal directories, where it is recommended in all its core practice areas.

## What we are looking for

Serle Court looks for highly motivated individuals with outstanding analytical ability, a practical approach, sound judgment, an ability to develop good client relationships and the potential to become an excellent advocate. Serle Court has a reputation for *'consistent high quality'* and members who are *'highly intelligent, user-friendly, approachable and supportive'* and seeks these qualities in its pupils.

Chambers generally requires a degree classification of a good 2:1 as a minimum. We aim to recruit 3 pupils each year with a view to offering tenancies to all who meet our standards.

## Funding

Funding for your legal training and pupillage can come from two main sources: a Pupillage Award from chambers, and scholarships from the Inns of Court.

Most Inns of Court scholarships are means-tested, so that the largest scholarships go to those in the greatest financial need. More detail on the Inns scholarships can be found on the Bar Council website<sup>1</sup>. There are scholarships to cover both the PGDL and the Bar Course. For example, Lincoln's Inn now awards up to £12,000 for the PGDL and up to £25,000 for the Bar Course<sup>2</sup>.

The Serle Court Pupillage Award is £75,000, and up to £25,000 of that can be drawn down during the preceding year, in addition to any Inns scholarship you may receive. Thus, an incoming Serle Court pupil who also receives an Inns scholarship will receive funding comparable to that offered by City law firms for the vocational year. A Pupillage Award is tax-free in respect of the first six months, making the post-tax value of the Pupillage Award substantially higher than an equivalent salary.

At Serle Court, a pupil can presume they will be taken on if they meet our training standards. Later on in this brochure, we explain the earnings a new tenant can aspire to in the early years of practice.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister/students-and-graduates/student-funding-and-scholarships.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lincolnsinn.org.uk/scholarships-prizes>

## Application and Selection Process

Serle Court participates in the Bar Council online centralised application scheme, the Pupillage Gateway. Every application for pupillage at Serle Court must be made through the Gateway and within its timetable.

Once the deadline has been reached, all applications are anonymised, reviewed separately by at least 2 members of chambers, and assessed in accordance with our selection criteria. In the past, this process has led to about 30 candidates being invited to a first interview of about 35 minutes conducted by panels of 3 members of chambers. To ensure we are treating everyone as fairly as possible in our recruitment process, anyone applying to Serle Court is now required to complete a short online situational judgement multiple choice test, created by business psychology consultants. The situational judgement test is intended to help identify able candidates who may not necessarily perform so well on the formal parts of a traditional application. It also is another way of getting to know how applicants would respond in workplace scenarios and allows applicants to showcase those of their abilities that may not be naturally captured by our application form. **No applicants will be disadvantaged in any way if they perform poorly on the test**

From those candidates interviewed in the first round, around ten will be invited to a second interview. The second interview is also conducted by a panel of three members of chambers. These interviews will centre upon a mock client

conference. Candidates will be given 40 minutes to consider a short problem question and prepare to deliver advice in a conference to members of chambers playing the role of clients/solicitors. The mock client conference itself will last around 30 minutes. The overall interview will be a little longer so that we can give candidates a chance to have a good look at us, too!

Please note that neither interview is intended to assess candidates' legal knowledge, and the questions are designed to be capable of being answered just as well by someone with one term of legal education as by someone who has completed a whole law degree.

## Rare

Serle Court is supported by the Rare Contextual Recruitment System in the pupillage process. For more information about Rare, please visit their website: <https://contextualrecruitment.co.uk/>

## My path to the Bar

My path to tenancy was unconventional in that I qualified as a solicitor (and subsequently, solicitor advocate) and practised as a litigator at Herbert Smith Freehills LLP for a few years before transferring to the Bar. A key milestone in my decision to take the leap was my stint as the judicial assistant to Lord Kitchin at the Supreme Court for the 2020-2021 court year. Whilst I tremendously enjoyed my practice as a solicitor, my time as a judicial assistant led me to conclude that a career at the Bar was the right path for me.

In view of my prior experience the Bar Standards Board granted me a waiver from the regulatory requirement to undertake pupillage. However, by then I had already accepted an offer of pupillage from Serle Court. I was also keen to have something akin to the 'pupillage' experience because I viewed it as a valuable opportunity to learn from experienced barristers in chambers and to gain exposure to those areas of Chancery practice that were less familiar to me, having come from a pure commercial disputes background. When I explained my thinking to Serle Court they were incredibly obliging and respectful of my wishes, and suggested that I undergo a period of training and assessment akin to pupillage for a period of up to 12 months. And so it was that I started as a 'trainee' in October 2022 alongside two pupils. It was made clear from the outset that we were not in competition with one another and that there was space for all of us in Chambers as long as we met the standard for tenancy. This meant that we felt able to bond as a cohort and formed a natural support network for one another from the beginning. This meant that we felt able to bond as a cohort and formed a natural support network for one another from the beginning.

## A day in the life of a trainee (or a few varieties thereof!)

My training comprised three 'seats': I spent about three months with each of Dan McCourt Fritz (shortly before he took silk in 2023) and Constance McDonnell KC, followed by an abridged seat of about six weeks with Jonathan Adkin KC.

The flavour and pace of each of my seats varied depending on the nature of my supervisor's practice at that point in time. There was certainly no dearth of variety: the cases that I was involved with variously raised issues of contract, tort, trusts, company, IP and probate law, among others. All of the work that I did was on live disputes, save for a few pieces of specialist drafting that one of my supervisors kindly asked me to undertake so that I might have the benefit of that experience (and her valuable feedback!).

I was delighted to assist with two trials and a number of interlocutory hearings during my training. On a typical day in the lead up to trial I would draft the skeleton argument, prepare cross examination notes and/or research points of law to feed into the submissions. During trial I would attend the hearing, observe conferences with the client before and after court, assist with continuing preparations for cross-examination and the drafting of closing submissions. In other words, I was very much treated like a member of the counsel team.

Apart from hearing-related work which might take up all day if it concerned a trial or particularly heavy application, I would usually divide my time between a few cases each day and undertake a mixture of legal research, drafting and/or assisting with preparations for advising in conference (colloquially called a "con"). On a typical day leading up to a con I would read the solicitor's instructions and accompanying papers, research the relevant issues, have a discussion with my supervisor

about the issues and attend the con. I would spend the rest of the day either conducting legal research or drafting documents such as pleadings. These tasks sometimes followed on from the con but often concerned unrelated cases that involved different areas of law. This meant that I became adept at quickly transitioning from one case to another several times a day, as needed – an important skill for practice.

I also attended three mediations during the course of my training. In two of these I shadowed my supervisor in their role as counsel to one of the parties to the mediation and in the third I shadowed our Head of Chambers, Elizabeth Jones KC, in her role as mediator of a dispute between two pharmaceutical companies. All three were fascinating and instructive experiences. Again, I was treated as a member of the team and valued the opportunity to assist by producing analyses of various offers and drafting settlement agreements. The opportunity to shadow the mediator provided unique insight into how the process works from their perspective which is valuable knowledge to have in preparation for guiding clients through the process of mediation in due course.

My supervisors always provided clear and detailed feedback on each piece of work. Indeed, throughout my training I was amazed by the amount of time and effort that each of them poured into teaching me.

My working hours were fairly regular and usually ran from 9am to 6pm. I did work longer hours on occasion but only ever out of my own volition. I was never asked (not even implicitly) to work late and my supervisors actively advised against it.

**Ramyaa Veerabathran**  
Pupil 2022-2023

## The atmosphere at Serle Court

I very much enjoyed getting to know the barristers and members of staff at Serle Court during the course of my training and was delighted to discover that its reputation for being a welcoming and friendly place to work is thoroughly well-deserved. The pupils and I were always invited to chambers social events including the weekly drinks, the Christmas party and numerous other events throughout the year. I felt that we were treated like we were part of Serle Court from the outset and was struck by the genuine interest that everyone showed in getting to know us.

## Life as a junior tenant

In addition to being thoroughly enjoyable and challenging (in a good way), my training has stood me in excellent stead in my first few months as a junior tenant at Serle Court. The work has continued to be interesting and varied, and there are plenty of opportunities for oral advocacy early on. The friendly and supportive atmosphere within Serle Court has played a big part in making my first few months of practice enjoyable.





## Life as a pupil at Serle Court

### The type of work

Even though I had a sense of what a commercial chancery practice entailed before I started pupillage, I was still (pleasantly) surprised by the breadth of work that chambers did. In effect, 'commercial chancery' – to Serle Court at least – comprised a spectrum with 'pure commercial' work at one end, 'traditional chancery' at the other, and everything in between. For example, one week I would be drafting submissions for a dispute that followed the fallout of an M&A deal; and the next I would draft a skeleton for a trusts and estates dispute. (The quality of the work was not affected by this range – all across that commercial chancery spectrum, my supervisors were often up against chambers that were in the top tiers for that kind of work).

This variety is especially valuable during pupillage as this provided plenty of opportunities to see and learn different types of advocacy – as well as keeping things interesting.

The pieces of work I did were equally varied. My supervisors made sure that I had a good diet of the bread and butter work (opinions, pleadings and skeletons). However, I also got to try out other, less traditional, pieces too. This included letters before claim; cross-examination notes; submissions to an expert accountant; and mock conferences. The vast majority – almost the entirety – of what I did during pupillage was on 'live' work. I found this very satisfying. Supervisors were always genuinely interested in my input and it was rewarding to see the fruits of my work go before a judge or client. This did present its own challenges: deadlines were often tight. But, in turn, this gave me a good feel for the pace of practice.

## pupillage

### The structure of pupillage

I sat with 4 different supervisors, each for 3 months. My hours were very respectable and regular: 9am to 6pm. Although, there were inevitably some exceptions to this, this was a result of helping with urgent deadlines. There were two formal assessments (an opinion and an advocacy assessment), pupillage at Serle Court is more informal in the sense that the tenancy decision is predominantly based on the feedback from your supervisors. There was no risk of being left in the dark as to how I was doing though. In addition to appraisals after sitting with each supervisor, I would often be told whether each piece of work I did was up to the standard expected. This was very much appreciated so I properly knew where I stood.

From the very first day, it was impressed upon me and my co-pupil that there was enough space for both of us if we met the requisite standard. There was therefore no sense of competition – which meant that we could be each other's sounding board during difficult times.

### The atmosphere in Chambers

Pupillage is undoubtedly a demanding experience but everyone at chambers was supportive and friendly. Following accepting my offer, chambers organised celebration drinks. I was particularly impressed by the fact that a wide range of members attended these: from junior juniors to silks. It seemed like lots of people from chambers were genuinely interested in pupils and getting to know them. Between my offer and starting, I was invited to events in Chambers so that I had the opportunity to meet people before I joined. On my first day, a number of members stopped by to introduce themselves. Then, welcome drinks a few weeks into pupillage were also well attended – with the clerks

coming in order to meet us properly. As to this, it was noticeable how strong the relationship between the barristers and clerks was in chambers.

When I was applying for pupillage, I would often read sets describe their work as varied and the atmosphere as friendly and collegiate. These are things you often hear. I feel that my pupillage at Serle Court demonstrated this concretely.

**Tim Benham-Mirando**

*Pupil 2019-2020*



## Life as a pupil at Serle Court

### A year of training

During pupillage I was constantly (and pleasantly) reminded that it was a year of training. I remember being quite surprised in my first few months by the number of barristers at Serle Court who would refer to 'when' I joined chambers, rather than 'if'.

Pupillage is of course challenging, and many times I did not see attaining tenancy as a 'when', but definitely an 'if'. However, the confidence members of chambers had in Serle Court's training process, and the confidence they had in me, made a great difference.

I received feedback on every piece of work I submitted and undertook two oral advocacy training exercises. The first being a mock summary judgment application, and the second being a mock trial which involved witness handling. I received really helpful feedback in both exercises and also found them very fun!

### Range of work

Over the year I had four supervisors – each for three months. This allowed me to see a range of work, as each supervisor had different specialisms – such as company law, probate or intellectual property. Seeing a range of work is really important. When you start pupillage you often don't really know what you want to do (and even if you do that might dramatically change later). For me, it was great to get an opportunity to do intellectual property – an area of law which I had neither studied nor any prior interest in - but am now determined to practise in.

During the year you will also do lots of work for other members of chambers. I found this a

great way to get to know other barristers and see practice areas outside those which your supervisors specialise in. I was able to assist a number of more junior barristers which gave me an insight into the type of work I would be doing in the not too distant future. Work from other members of chambers comes via your supervisor and I always found that my supervisors were very protective and ensured that I never had too much on my plate.

### Diversity and Inclusivity

During my first few months I noticed that my experience of pupillage was very male dominated. I mentioned that I would appreciate working with more women. My request was immediately acted upon. I was assigned a female mentor and also a female supervisor for the following seat. This response was uplifting. From that point onwards I met a lot more women in Chambers and now have an abundance of role models. I am very grateful to be at Serle Court, a set which, in my view, has a genuine commitment to issues of diversity and inclusivity.

**Niamh Herrett**  
*Pupil 2021-2022*





## What to expect during pupillage

Each pupil will spend a 12-month period shadowing four members of chambers, which enables pupils to be exposed to a range of practice areas. By shadowing members of chambers, rather than taking on work in their name, each pupil is as well-qualified and confident as possible before starting practice. During the year, pupils do not get the opportunity to undertake advocacy in court; however, we ensure that advocacy exercises, conducted in front of a senior member of chambers, and other assessments designed to improve practical skills, take place. Supervisors provide frequent and relevant feedback and monitor pupils' progress to ensure that the work they are given fulfils their training needs.

We want to make pupils feel a part of chambers from the time that they accept their offers of pupillage. They are invited to chambers events, both formal and informal, and are encouraged to get to know both members and staff.

## Tenancy at Serle Court

Serle Court strives to live up to its reputation as a *'definite go-to chambers'* (Chambers and Partners), but we also believe it is important to have a balanced life. Tenants can choose their own working hours and strategic approach to their practice, and will work alongside the clerks to achieve this. Our clerks are highly recommended in the legal directories, with clients stating, *'it's an absolute breeze to instruct them – the clerks are really responsive and good, very available and respond quickly'* (Chambers and Partners).

Our clerks adopt a flexible and sensitive approach working with our barristers to assist them in building the practice they desire. However, new tenants can usually expect to earn in excess of £100,000 in their first year.

Also, new tenants at Serle Court pay no rent in their first year of practice, and no chambers expenses until their earnings exceed £60,000 per annum. We provide an income guarantee worth up to £120,000 over the first two years of practice (but no new tenant has ever earned less than the guaranteed amount over that period).

## Mini-Pupillage

Mini-pupillage at Serle Court is designed to be an enjoyable and useful experience. Our mini-pupils experience various aspects of life as a practising barrister and gain first-hand experience of our informal and friendly atmosphere. Mini-pupillages last for one day and are unfunded, but we will reimburse your expenses in attending. Mini-pupillages are not formally assessed, and are not a requirement for an application for pupillage, though prospective pupils are of course welcome to apply.

We offer mini-pupillages in two rounds (in autumn and spring) each year to individuals who have completed the first year of a law degree or at least one term of the GDL or equivalent. Please note that they are heavily oversubscribed. Further details can be found on our website.

Applications for mini-pupillage should be made on the Serle Court application form, which can be found here: <https://www.serlecourt.co.uk/join-us/mini-pupillage>

We particularly encourage applications from women, LGBTQ+, people from ethnic minority communities, and disabled candidates as well as candidates from other underrepresented groups in the legal sector.

Applications must be addressed to Juliette Drummond and can be submitted via email to: [pupillage@serlecourt.co.uk](mailto:pupillage@serlecourt.co.uk), or by post to 6 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London, WC2A 3QS.

## Reserved Mini-Pupillages

Three of our mini-pupillages in the autumn round are reserved for applicants from groups that are underrepresented at the bar. You are eligible to apply for a reserved mini-pupillage if no part of your

secondary (post 11) education was at a fee-paying school and:

- You are black, or of mixed black heritage; or
- Neither of your parents went to university; or
- You are currently in receipt of state benefits other than child benefit, or the income in your household for at least 3 years of your secondary education came from or was materially supplemented by state benefits other than child benefit; or
- You are currently classified as having no recourse to public funds, or your household for at least 3 years of your secondary education was classified as having no recourse to public funds (with 'no recourse to public funds' bearing the meaning set out in s.115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999); or
- You were ever eligible for free school meals; or
- You have been in care; or
- You have caring responsibilities or had caring responsibilities at any time during your secondary education or while you were at university; or
- You have refugee status.

You must indicate in your covering letter or email that your application is for a reserved mini-pupillage. Otherwise the application process is the same as above, and you must use the application form. You will be considered for an unreserved mini-pupillage even if you do not secure a reserved mini-pupillage. You may apply for a reserved mini-pupillage whether or not you have ever applied for an unreserved mini-pupillage.

Recipients of reserved mini-pupillages will be guaranteed a first-round interview should they apply for pupillage in the recruitment cycle immediately following their mini-pupillage offer.



## Facilities Support

Serle Court is located in one of the finest buildings in Lincoln's Inn. It is a spacious 17th century premises which has undergone extensive refurbishment, providing excellent facilities for members, clients and staff.

Chambers is headed by the Chambers Director, Kathryn Purkis, who was formerly a member of Chambers. Our practice management team is made up of 12 clerks, a finance team, and an operations team of 3, all of whom are consistently recognised for providing a *'good service and making things happen'* (Chambers and Partners).

Working alongside the clerks, we have a business development team of 3, a finance manager, extensive external IT support, a housekeeper, and a reception team who provide additional administrative support for our library. We have access to all the best online research facilities and all of our IT platforms are accessible remotely, enabling members to work from home, or indeed any location around the world.

## Your personal data & GDPR

Serle Court holds and processes a wide range of data, some of which relates to the individuals who are applying for pupillage. All of the information that we obtain has been provided by you on your application, for example, by having given your contact details. Your details are anonymised before members of chambers see your application during the selection process, though naturally the pupillage administrator and Chambers Director see and have access to the full application. Once the first interview shortlist is compiled, those applications will be seen unredacted.

All applications that are not successful are destroyed at the end of the calendar year.





*“Pupils and juniors are consistently very good. They appear to receive excellent training and are a glowing reflection on Serle Court”*

Legal 500, 2023

## List of all members of chambers

### King's Counsel

Elizabeth Jones KC  
 Patrick Talbot KC  
 Kuldip Singh KC  
 Paul Chaisty KC  
 Dominic Dowley KC  
 Conor Quigley KC  
 Philip Marshall KC  
 Philip Jones KC  
 Lance Ashworth KC  
 David Casement KC FCI Arb  
 Christopher Stoner KC  
 Michael Edenborough KC  
 John Machell KC  
 Hugh Norbury KC  
 David Blayney KC  
 Jonathan Adkin KC  
 Rupert Reed KC  
 Zoe O'Sullivan KC  
 Andrew Moran KC  
 Daniel Lightman KC  
 Richard Wilson KC  
 Prof. Jonathan Harris KC (Hon.)  
 Dakis Hagen KC  
 Constance McDonnell KC  
 Justin Higgo KC  
 Timothy Collingwood KC  
 Giles Richardson KC  
 Dan McCourt Fritz KC

### Juniors +10 Years

Julian Burling  
 Andrew Francis  
 William Henderson  
 Beverly-Ann Rogers  
 James Behrens  
 Nicholas Harrison  
 Andrew Bruce  
 David Drake  
 Thomas Braithwaite

### Further Information

#### Pupillage Secretary

Dan McCourt Fritz KC

#### Mini-Pupillage Secretary

Charlotte Beynon

#### Pupillage Administrator

Juliette Drummond

Simon Hattan  
 Jennifer Haywood  
 Ruth Jordan  
 Jonathan Fowles  
 Matthew Morrison  
 Michael Walsh  
 James Mather  
 Paul Johnson  
 Gareth Tilley  
 James Weale  
 Paul Adams  
 Jennifer Meech  
 Thomas Elias  
 Sophie Holcombe  
 Thomas Fletcher  
 Adil Mohamedbhai  
 Jonathan McDonagh  
 Emma Hargreaves  
 Amy Proferes  
 Zahler Bryan  
 Harry Martin  
 Prof. Suzanne Rab  
 Adrian de Froment

### Juniors –10 Years

Oliver Jones  
 Stephanie Wickenden  
 Eleni Dinenis  
 Charlotte Beynon  
 Gregor Hogan  
 Mark Wraith  
 Sparsh Garg  
 Jamie Randall  
 Stephanie Thompson  
 Tim Benham-Mirando  
 Max Marenbon  
 John Eldridge  
 Andrew Gurr  
 George Vare  
 Wilson Leung  
 Niamh Herrett  
 Stefano Theodoli-Braschi  
 Ryan Tang  
 Matthew Innes  
 Ramyaa Veerabathran

For further information regarding pupillage or mini-pupillage, please contact us at:  
[pupillage@serlecourt.co.uk](mailto:pupillage@serlecourt.co.uk)







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