

ashfords

A career in law with a difference

Graduates 2023/24



Ashfords LLP
[ashfords.co.uk](https://www.ashfords.co.uk)

Enjoy your work, follow your path, reach your potential



At Ashfords, we understand the importance of making the right choice when it comes to your training contract. I hope that the following pages offer you an insight into our unique culture, our approach to working and how these elements shape the Ashfords training contract experience.

From our achievements and values to the support you will receive as a trainee solicitor, there are many reasons why we could be the right firm for you.

Read on to decide for yourself...

Kerry

Kerry Morgan-Gould
Partner & Training Principal

So, what is the difference?

At Ashfords, we believe that our difference lies in our people. The way we work together with our clients, share and support each other's ambitions, and celebrate our successes.

We have an open and friendly culture, and our people tell us they genuinely enjoy coming to work and spending time with their colleagues.

If you join the Ashfords team, you will have the opportunity to work with diverse and interesting clients. You will help to advise them on a range of legal issues, from protecting family assets and solving disputes to the complexities of making investments and delivering major infrastructure projects.

We are ambitious as a firm and will be ambitious for you too because we want all of our people to fulfil their potential as part of a forward-thinking team and business.

Across the firm, everyone will encourage you to feel confident contributing and taking part. We know that bringing our diverse experiences and perspectives together helps us deliver an outstanding service for our clients.

Importantly, too, we want our lawyers to be true business advisors who can deliver advice that works in context. So, you will work alongside experienced lawyers who are leaders in their field to develop not only your technical skills, but also commercial and client awareness.

We offer the broad range of services you might expect from a national law firm including corporate, commercial, disputes, real estate and construction. We also have one of the leading private wealth teams who are trusted advisers to private clients and their families across the UK.

Working with our international network of independent law firms ADVOC, you may also get involved in supporting our clients with their international legal needs, where we can access support in over 70 countries worldwide.

Our values



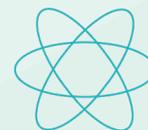
Think Team

Proactively collaborate, share knowledge, insights and opportunities with colleagues and clients.



Be Open

Communicate openly and consistently. Ask questions, share views & opinions. Listen to and respect the opinions of others.



Always Grow

Ensure that we grow ourselves and also support the growth of our colleagues, our clients and the wider community.



Make a difference

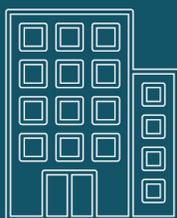
Care about our impact inside and outside of the firm and our role delivering the right results for our clients.

Ashfords at a glance

Lawyers you can count on to deliver because we care as much as you do about getting the right result.

Figures relate to financial year 2022 - 2023

Ashfords in numbers



4

Offices in the UK

500+ People



working flexibly as part of our 'Ways of Working' framework.



+70

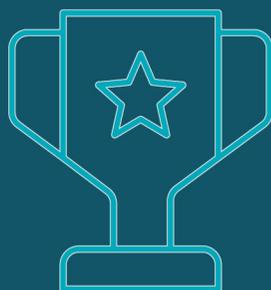
Countries

worldwide where we can support clients with their legal needs.

Recognition

Ranked in

The Times Best Law Firms



2023

Real Estate, Restructuring & Insolvency and Corporate.

Ranked by

Experian MarketIQ

as one of the most active legal advisers by volume in the south west and in the top 20 for the UK.



Recognised by

World Trademark Review

as a leading UK trademark practice for the second year.

Recognised by Chambers

for our expertise in

21 practice areas with

9 band one lawyers and

48 lawyers individually recognised.



Legal 500

in 36 practice areas with nine top tier rankings, 33 lawyers individually ranked with 13 rising stars.

Environmental & community impact

3



Launching our new three year, three charities programme supporting St Mungo's, The Ocean Conservation Trust and The Trussell Trust.



335

volunteering hours recorded across a wide range of projects.



£100k+

raised for our 2022 charity of the year:

Winston's Wish

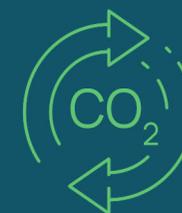
11 apprentices

to widen access to careers in the legal sector through our apprenticeship and solicitor apprenticeship schemes.



£6k

funding for the Marine Scholarship at the University of Plymouth – one of the leading marine courses in the UK.



271tCO2e

Offsetting our annual reportable emissions through a recognised UN scheme. 69% of our waste recycled and zero to landfill.

Training with Ashfords

We offer training contracts based in our South West or Bristol offices and you can expect to spend six months in four different seats. There is flexibility for our trainees to complete seats in different offices and it is likely that you will spend some time in Real Estate, our fastest growing team.

Real work, real responsibility

Our trainees experience real work and are very much part of the team - you go to meetings and to court, meet clients and understand the cases you are working on. We believe there's no better way to learn and it provides an excellent start to your legal career. Thanks to our collaborative approach to everything that we do, you will have the chance to learn from some of the best lawyers in their field.

Investing in you

Our consistently high retention rates (100% in 2023) prove that we want our trainees to stick around for the long-term, so our commitment to you extends beyond your training contract – we have a clear career model with

“Trainees were huge fans of their supervisors, who have reportedly mastered that “perfect balance of being hands-on while giving you independence.”

[Chambers Student UK Guide](#)

structured development to support you at each stage. We are transparent about promotion criteria and you will have access to the development you need to help you to achieve your career ambitions.

Your route to qualification

At Ashfords, we want opportunity to be open to all, so we have launched three different pathways to qualifying via the SQE, and we will contribute towards your course and exam fees. We work in partnership with the University of Law, and will therefore expect you to undertake your chosen course at one of their centres.

“It feels like they are willing to take you as your are – they don't have a fixed idea of what trainees should be like.”

[Ashfords trainee feedback](#)

A spotlight on trainee life

So what does trainee life at Ashfords actually look like?

We spoke to third seat trainee, Tamar, all about a typical day in a Real Estate seat with Ashfords...

7:15am - 8:15am

If the weather is good, I often start my day with a cycle* into the Exeter office, along the cycle path from Teignmouth. **Disclaimer: Here, my 'typical day' is taking place in the summer, otherwise my morning would start an hour later and almost certainly involve the car!*

8:15am - 8:45am

I use the shower facilities at the office to get ready for work. You'll often find other early-bird Ashfords employees using the office gym at this time of day. Once I'm ready, I ease into the working day by checking my inbox.

9:00am - 11:30am

This morning I'm reviewing a deed of covenant, on behalf of our local authority client and drafting a letter of advice. The task relates to one of many initiatives being implemented by our client, to reduce its nitrate emission levels and achieve 'nutrient neutrality'.

11:30am - 13:00am

After a quick coffee at 'the Truck' (Ashfords' own portable equivalent of Pret), I crack on with preparing stamp duty land tax (SDLT) returns and draft land registry documents, involving the sale of multiple titles in Dorset.

1:00pm - 2:00pm

Like most days I have lunch with other trainees and paralegals, then head out for a 20-minute stroll.

2:00pm - 4:00pm

This afternoon I'm accompanying a senior fee earner to a meeting with a landowner client, who is looking to enter into an option agreement. The client is seeking advice on the suitability of bids he's received from three interested developers.

4:00pm - 5:00pm

I've been assisting the planning team in drafting S106 agreements on behalf of another local authority client. This afternoon I need to circulate some engrossments to the signatories and raise invoices for the s106 contribution. I've been trusted to manage these files, although help is always on hand if needed.

5:00pm - 5:30pm

Next, I'm assisting with a website article. This is one of the 'non-billable' tasks that trainees can get involved in. We also help to organise department away days or the annual summer party!

5:30pm onwards

If I've cycled to work, inevitably there's only one way I'm getting home. However, there are many activities you can get involved in. These involve socials with the Exeter Young Business Club (XYBC), evening football, the weekly walking group, PT sessions (which I hear are quite brutal!), indoor climbing and more. The firm is very encouraging of a healthy work-life balance – you'll always have time for your hobbies in the evenings.



Join our team

**There is more to Ashfords than sitting at your desk.
As a trainee, you will be involved in the wider life of the firm.**

Build your networks

As a trainee, you will have the opportunity to join our young business community networking groups. They hold a range of social activities and networking events throughout the year, which are a great way to meet like-minded professionals and make those all important connections which will support you later in your career.

A cohort of collaboration, not competition

Your fellow trainees will be a key support network for you during your training contract. We provide plenty of opportunities to come together as a group, to assist with key business development initiatives and social events – an exciting task for our trainees each year is to organise the firm's summer party!

Make a difference

Ensuring Ashfords is an inclusive environment is key to our ongoing success. We always welcome new members to the Ashfords Diversity Group, who help to drive forward the firm's diversity strategy through awareness initiatives and events.

We also understand the importance of making a positive impact in our communities. We currently support three charities as part of our Power of Three programme, working with the Trussell Trust, St Mungo's and the Ocean Conservation Trust. Our trainees play a major role in our fundraising events and everyone is encouraged to get involved, including through team based volunteering.

Get involved!

We want our trainees to get involved in the Ashfords community. We understand there's more to life at Ashfords than the day job so when you join us, you will have the opportunity to sign up to a number of employee-led clubs including netball, cricket and football. Something else you think we could offer? Why not launch a club of your own!



Think we could be the right firm for you?

There are two different ways to apply for an Ashfords training contract. Our summer scheme route gives you the opportunity to spend a week at either our Exeter or Bristol office working in three departments.

You will spend lots of time with our current trainees, understanding their work and what it is like to be a trainee with us. During the week, you will have the opportunity to secure a training contract with the firm by participating in an assessment centre.

We also have an 'Assessment Centre only' option for those who want to apply directly for a training contract. Our Assessment Centre tests your skills across a range of areas and includes written exercises, role plays and a partner interview.

"The summer scheme was a genuinely enjoyable experience and I gained a completely different perspective into the culture and work that a legal career entails. The Scheme also helped me become more aware of what different firms can offer and reaffirmed that exciting work can be done outside the city."

More than just work experience

We have carefully designed our summer scheme to ensure that you will gain exposure to a variety of practice areas, whilst also having the opportunity to meet our people from across the business, experience our unique culture and develop your understanding of our approach to client service.



Networking opportunities



Workshops



Assessment centre



Real trainee work

Q&A sessions



100%

of attendees said they would recommend an Ashfords summer scheme to a peer.

A spotlight on the Ashfords summer scheme

Are you ready for the Ashfords summer scheme? Speaking with LawCareers.net, Billy, a future Ashfords trainee, provides his insight into his week with the firm...

What work did you get involved with on the vacation scheme?

Each department had pre-prepared task bundles for me to work through, providing detailed insights into the types of task and real-life work they handle.

Commercial litigation: I delved into cases and worked on tasks relating to dispute resolution. It was fascinating to see how the team navigates complex legal issues and finds innovative solutions for clients.

Wills, trusts and estate planning: Here, I built an understanding of the legal processes involved in managing and distributing assets.

Corporate department: I was given an insight into mergers and acquisitions (M&A), commercial transactions and marine law.

Was the vacation scheme what you expected? Did the vacation scheme live up to your expectations?

The scheme completely surpassed my expectations. The quality of work provided was outstanding - it enabled me to gain a realistic and in-depth insight into the life of a trainee solicitor.

Trainees, partners and other members of the firm were always available to answer questions, provide feedback and offer their expertise. Their willingness to share knowledge and guide me made a significant impact on my experience - I felt welcomed, valued and encouraged to learn and grow in an inclusive environment.

What's the most important thing you learnt about the firm while on the scheme?

Definitely Ashfords' focus on its people - while I'd gathered this from the firm's website, experiencing it in person truly reinforced it. Ashfords stands out as the most welcoming firm I've ever visited. Team members were always ready to assist one another and share their knowledge.

“Being placed in various departments allowed me to develop networking skills and interact with professionals at different levels. This enhanced my ability to build relationships, communicate effectively and establish connections.”

What's one piece of advice you'd pass on to future vacation schemers?

Be yourself. It sounds cliché, but it's essential to remember that Ashfords values authenticity and individuality.

While it's important to showcase your legal knowledge and skills, it's equally important to let your unique personality shine through. Ashfords look for individuals who bring their own perspectives, experiences and strengths to the table.

What next?

Applications for our 2024 summer schemes and assessment centres will open on **1 November 2023** and will remain open until **31 March 2024**.

Key dates

- **1 November 2023**
Applications open
- **31 March 2024**
Application deadline
- **3 - 21 June 2024**
Exeter & Bristol summer schemes
- **25 and 27 June 2024**
Exeter & Bristol assessment centre days
- **August 2024**
Offers made

Meet the team



Jess Iley

Talent Attraction Manager

“Tell us why you love us! The clearer you are on ‘Why Ashfords’ the more likely this is to shine through.”



Toby Tompkins

Talent Attraction Specialist

“Your application isn’t a test of your legal knowledge – be succinct and cut the jargon.”

Scan to apply!

