

ashfords

# A career in law with a difference

Trainee brochure 2024/25

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

# Meet our Training Principle

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There are so many factors to consider in choosing the right firm to complete your training contract with. At times, the myriad of information, advertising and statistics out there can feel overwhelming. I hope that this brochure offers an insightful and accessible digest on Ashfords' culture, our people and the work that we do.

At Ashfords, we place enormous value on home-grown talent and take great pride in seeing former trainees consistently forge long and successful careers with us.

Our commitment to providing high quality training, together with an unrivalled culture of support, respect and approachability at every level of the business, underpin and shape the Ashfords training contract experience. Why not read on and see for yourself.

*Laura*

**Laura Reeve**

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.

But our difference is more than just our people, it's:

If you join the Ashfords team, 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.



An open and friendly culture, where people genuinely enjoy coming to work.



The opportunity to work with our international network of independent law firms, ADVOC, where we can access support in over 70 countries.



The diverse and interesting client base – from private clients to large businesses and PLCs.



Having the ability to work alongside experienced lawyers who are leaders in their field from day one.

## 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.

## Ashfords in numbers



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



## Recognition



Recognised in  
Legal **500**

in **36 practice areas** with **12 Rising Stars**, **53 lawyers** individually ranked with **13 Next Generation Partners**.

## Recognised by Chambers

for our expertise in

**21** practice areas with  
**10** band one lawyers and  
**6** Star Associates & Associates to Watch



Recognised by  
**World Trademark Review**

as a leading UK trademark practice for the third year.

Highly commended

## Property Law Firm of the Year

at the Alternative Credit Investor Peer2Peer lender awards.



Ranked by  
**Experian MarketIQ**

as one of the most active legal advisers by volume - top five in the South West.



## Environmental & community impact



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



**750+**

volunteering hours recorded across a wide range of projects.

**£100k+**

raised for our 2022 charity of the year: **Winston's Wish**.



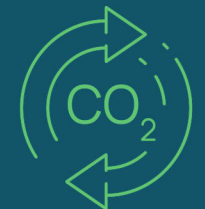
**12** apprentices

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**

Making environmental investments to mitigate carbon emissions including with the Seaweed Farming Innovation project run by Biome Algae.

# 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 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.

“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](#)

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

[Ashfords trainee feedback](#)

# A day in the life of an Ashfords trainee

So what does a day as a trainee like look like? Tamar, a solicitor at Ashfords who was a trainee with the firm, details the typical trainee day in a Real Estate seat...

## 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.



# Extracurriculars at Ashfords

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At Ashfords, it's important to get involved beyond the day-to-day trainee life and there are a lot of chances to maximise the opportunities the firm has to offer.

As a trainee, you will:

Build your networks, with the opportunity to join our young business community networking groups, attending various social and networking events throughout the year.

Be part of a collaborative trainee cohort, with plenty of opportunities to come together as a group, assist with key business development initiatives and social events throughout the year.

Make a difference in the community, with the opportunity to play a key role in fundraising opportunities for our charity partners. We also welcome new members to our growing Diversity Group.

**Get involved!** There's so much more to Ashfords than the day job, and when you join us, you'll have the opportunity to sign up to a number of our employee led clubs including football, cricket and netball.

# 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

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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?

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.

# The application process

## Key dates

- **1 November 2024**  
Applications open
- **31 March 2025**  
Application deadline
- **April/May 2025**  
Complete the Watson Glaser Critical Thinking test
- **June 2025**  
Attend an Ashfords summer scheme or assessment centre day
- **August 2025**  
Offers made

# Meet the team



**Toby Tompkins**  
Talent Attraction Manager

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



**Isabella Gartside**  
Early Careers Assistant

“Don’t try to fit into a mould or guess what we want to hear – being genuine is something that really stands out in applications.”

**Scan to apply!**

