






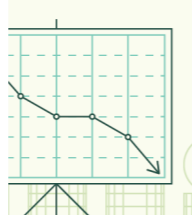





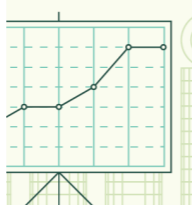
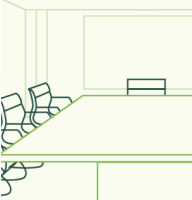

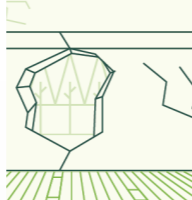
Your path to tenancy

A comprehensive guide to a 12-month pupillage at Tanfield



Tanfield's main areas of expertise




Tanfield is a leading property set. The main areas of expertise are:

 Residential property	 Commercial property	 Real property
 Service charges	 Enfranchisement	 Insolvency
 Development disputes	 Agriculture & rural	 Infrastructure, natural resources & environment
 ADR	 Building safety	 Commercial disputes, finance, securities, mortgages & receivership
 Company & shareholder disputes	 Private client	 Professional negligence

Tanfield at a glance

- Up to **3** pupillages available
- **£80,000** pupillage award of which **£40,000** is guaranteed earnings
- Up to **£20,000** can be drawn down during Bar vocational training year
- Online access to all **major legal publications**
- Provision of **laptop** and screen
- Compulsory **training courses** paid for by Tanfield
- Internal **training programme** throughout the year
- We are a **leading** business and property set
- **Friendly and inclusive** atmosphere
- **Supportive** training programme
- We only recruit those with a **realistic prospect** of becoming a member
- Positive **work/life balance**
- Opportunity to get involved in Tanfield's **business development** and marketing activities
- **100%** of pupils in the last 5 years have been offered tenancy

Key facts about chambers

Members / silks 53/6	Pupils 03	Head of Chambers Andrew Butler KC	
	James Fieldsend Chair of the Pupillage Committee		Christy Burzio Barrister

"At Tanfield, we have a strong record of our pupils at the end of their pupillage joining chambers as members. This practice of developing chambers' membership through pupillage has fostered a supportive environment for those embarking on both pupillage and the start of their careers in practice."

"Tanfield has been incredibly supportive in the development of my practice, enabling me to build an extremely busy and fulfilling workload in the company of people I both like and admire."





The first thing to say is that there is no magic formula which can be applied universally across chambers. Every pupillage application is different. Depending on their specialisms, culture, or just the preferences of the pupillage committee, each chambers will be looking for something slightly different to the next. It's therefore really important to ensure that each application you make is tailored to the specific chambers to which you are applying.

That said, here are some general tips which helped me when I applied. I have split these between the two stages which each application will (at least) entail: written form and interview. There's also a lot of good advice online.

Lorenzo Leoni
Barrister and former Tanfield pupil

How to succeed in pupillage applications



Written application

1. Focus on what's being assessed. Most chambers are now very transparent as to the criteria they use to assess pupillage applications. Be laser-focussed on these and ensure you've put the requisite information down to help your reader/ marker tick the boxes on their mark sheet.
2. Do the basics and keep it simple. Concision will be greatly appreciated by those reading the app. Keep it focussed and tight: there's rarely any need for grandiose or highfalutin language. Make sure you proofread aggressively (and give to someone else to scan if you can) to help avoid unnecessary and sloppy typos.



Interview

1. Prep the knowable but don't sweat the unknowable. Make sure you know your written application well, chambers' specialisms and why you want to do them, and have something to say to the basic questions one can expect (why the Bar, why us etc). However, it is inevitable that interviews will test you in a way for which you can't prepare. It's important therefore to not get paralysed by preparation - try and stay relaxed and give your mind space to improvise when in the room. Your interviewers will be assessing how you cope with the unexpected.
2. Acknowledge nerves. They'll be there and you'll have your own method of dealing with them. The panel will know you are nervous and will be able to disregard them in the main.

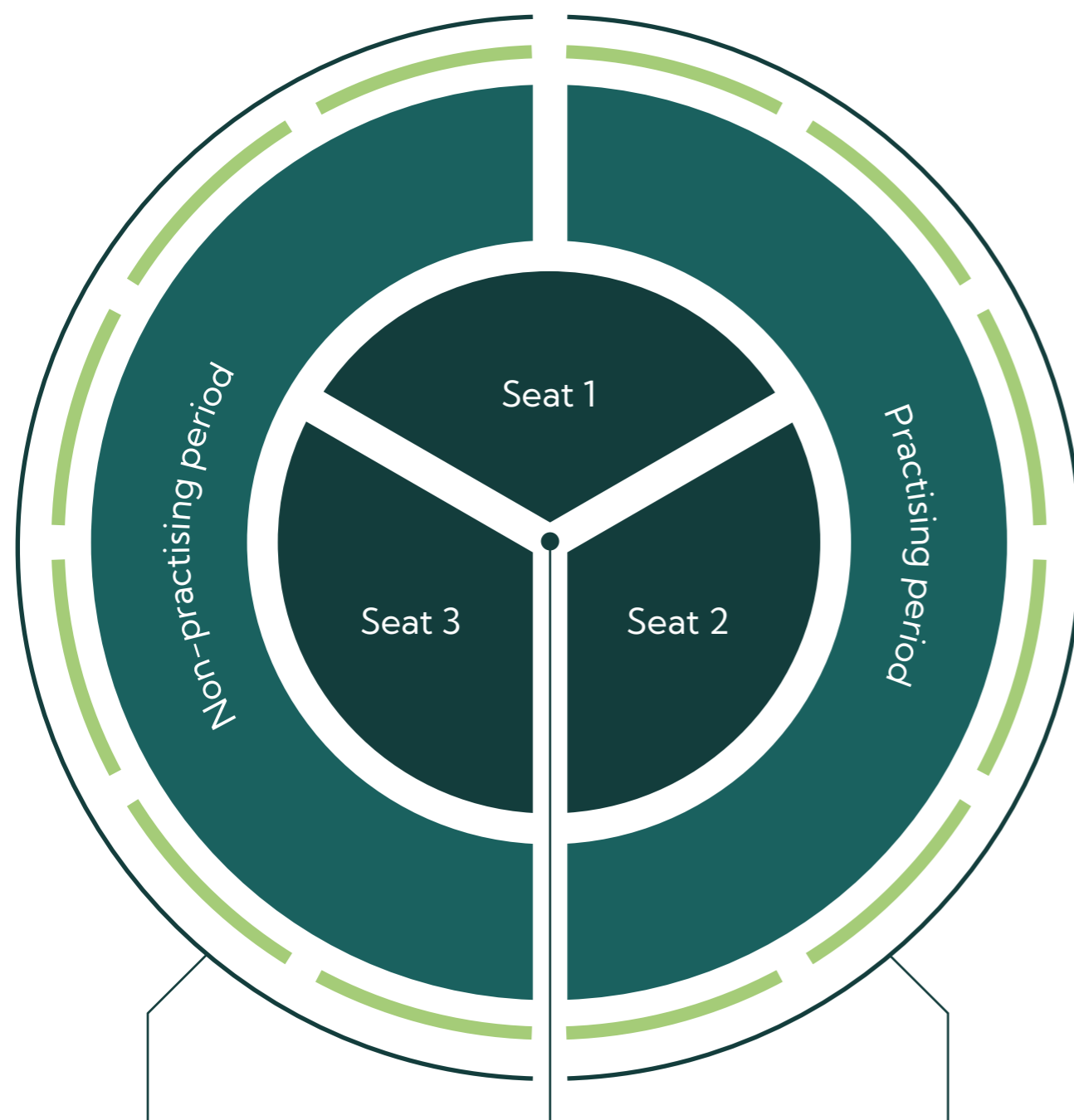
3. Research ahead of time. I've been told by those who mark applications in chambers that a common error is displaying a basic or sometimes simply inaccurate grasp of what chambers does. Make sure to look at the profiles of the most recent junior tenants to ascertain exactly what the daily diet of work is at the junior end of chambers.

4. No exaggeration! These answers could form the basis of a question in interview. Ask yourself in relation to any assertion on your application: is this something you'd be happy defending in the face of a panel of inquisitive barristers?

3. Be professional. This doesn't mean being overly deferential or formal. Like your written application, it's unlikely any panel will favour grandiosity over a more straightforward and pragmatic approach. One thing which will be tested is your ability to deal with solicitor and lay clients - these will want you to be personable but professional. Approach the panel in the same way.

One thought trick I employed (with varying degrees of success) was to approach my interviews as if they were work and I was being paid for them. This helped strip the exercise of any performance anxiety so I could simply focus on the task in hand. This also worked for written exercises which are sometimes necessary for some chambers.

Structure of pupillage



- First six months (non-practising period)

- Shadow members including pupil supervisor
- Paperwork including opinions and pleadings

- Attend court and client conferences in person and online

- 3 seats of 4 months each covering all our main practice areas

- Each seat supported by a different pupil supervisor

- Pupils sit in their pupil supervisor's room

- In person supervision throughout pupillage

- Second six months (practising period)

- Practical experience of being on your feet in court

- Accompany members to court

- Paperwork including opinions and pleadings

Life in chambers

Our office hours are **08:30 – 18:30** and pupils are not expected to work outside these hours.

Nor is pupillage all about work. You will be involved in client entertainment, conferences, seminars and all our social activities.

The Tanfield pupillage experience by Annie Higgo

When I was applying for pupillage, I had a clear idea that I wanted to practise in property, so naturally Tanfield was top of my list. My first introduction to land law was during my GDL, and I found that (unlike some of my peers), I both really enjoyed the subject and found that it suited the way that my brain worked out problems.

Pupillage at Tanfield is split into three seats of four months in which you sit with different members of chambers; the work you do for each supervisor depends on the stage of your pupillage. The clerking team at Tanfield are incredibly supportive and make the transition into practising straightforward. During my pupillage I had one formal advocacy assessment with feedback from the whole pupillage committee. I still use the tips and guidance I was given that day in almost every hearing I do! Otherwise, the feedback was informal and ad hoc. I enjoyed not having structured marking and assessment of each piece of work I did as it felt like I could develop organically as a barrister without the pressure of a formal marking system. Tanfield is one of the few sets at the commercial chancery bar where you have a second six in which you're doing largely your own work on your feet. Whilst it was daunting in March 2023 heading into my first hearing, you very quickly relax into it, and there's huge benefits to becoming confident in court advocacy whilst having the safety net of your supervisors to field any question, no matter how small.

Moving into junior practice felt like a smooth transition having practised for 6 months with the safety net of my supervisors before taking up the reins on my own. I've been able to develop areas of my practice that I enjoy and streamline the sort of work I want to do from a very early stage, such as broadening into private client work including contentious probate, Inheritance Act claims and broader trust issues, alongside the wider property work that Tanfield is well known for. The quality of work even at the very junior end has



been enormous. I have appeared in the Court of Appeal twice, worked on a successful application for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court, appeared as sole counsel in the High Court and in multiple multi-track trials alongside pleading numerous High Court and complex claims. There has been huge variety in the work I do and there is an abundance of work at the junior end to get stuck into.

Tanfield take on their pupils with an expectation that they will all be taken on as tenants, and the support systems in place during your pupillage continue into your junior years of practice. Whilst pupillage is naturally stressful, I never felt any excess pressure from chambers nor was tenancy ever made to feel out of reach. I still rely on my former supervisors an enormous amount and they're incredibly generous with their time and knowledge. The overriding memory for me of pupillage at Tanfield was how supported I felt. Other members of chambers genuinely want you to succeed, and pupillage is structured in a way to give you the best chance of doing so.



Top tips for building a successful practice

There is no secret recipe for success at the Bar. Everyone will have, or will have found, their own route and their own measure of success. That said, there are five groups of people who can help (or hinder) your life and career at the bar. Making the most of these groups will maximise your chances of success:

1. Other barristers: Primarily these are other barristers in chambers, although friends in other chambers can be equally helpful. Just because a barrister is self-employed does not mean that they work alone. In the early years especially, it is important to share ideas, critique each other, and if in doubt to always ask questions. The law changes every day, which means every day there is something new to learn.

2. Practice managers (also called clerks) and other chambers staff: It is vital to build a good relationship and an open channel of communication so that they know your goals and your limits. In the early years your diary will change on a daily, if not hourly, basis and without your PMs/clerks you will miss something.

3. The solicitor(s): Every contact with your instructing solicitors is an opportunity to market yourself to them. Whether it is an introductory phone call, a coffee after Court, or a weekday lunch you want them to make you their first port of call.

4. The lay client(s): It is often easy to forget that your day-to-day life may be the most stressful day of their life. Solicitors will always appreciate you taking the time to explain what is going on and why, as well as assisting in expectation management.

5. You: You are self-employed so the buck stops with you. You need to decide what a 'Successful Practice' looks like, and whether it is measured in Court time, quality of work, quality of instruction, billing or any other measure. It is only once you have this clear in your head that you can work together with the other groups to build that practice.

Selection process – for applicants selected for an interview



Selection criteria

- Intellectual achievement (at least a 2:1)
- Analytical thinking
- Effective communication
- Influencing/advocacy skills
- Resilience
- Interpersonal skills
- Drive and determination
- Motivation
- Ability to work independently



Application process

- We are members of the Pupillage Gateway, so we follow their timetable.
- You may begin submitting applications via the Pupillage Gateway from 5th January 2026, with a deadline of 22nd January 2026.
- Interviews usually take place in March/April.



Selection process

First interview:

- Legal and ethical problems: You will be given 30 minutes to consider one legal and one ethical problem.
- Interview: The interview is split between 2 panels. You will have 30 minutes with each panel. One panel will ask you about the legal problem, the other about the ethical problem and your application form.

Second interview:

- Legal problem. A week before the interview, you will be given a legal problem and asked to prepare a written opinion. We provide online access to legal materials. You will be given a day to send back the written opinion.
- Interview.

Offers:

- If you are given an offer, you will have 7 days in which to accept it.



**Training during pupillage
is highly-rated.**

LEGAL CHEEK



**A very well-organised and
approachable set.**

CHAMBERS & PARTNERS



Tanfield is an excellent chambers.

LEGAL 500

