



St.Mary's

Membership Prospectus

stmarysfamily.co.uk

Overview

As a specialist chambers we have a clear vision to be the number one choice for family law outside London.

We strive to provide honesty, transparency, and clarity in everything we do.

We want our barristers, pupils and staff to feel a keen sense of job satisfaction by having:

- access to high-quality work,
- the time, resources and support to do a good job,
- a good work/life balance.

Our people and our clients are key to all that we do. We listen to what they say, and we treat them fairly and with respect.

Through efficient working methods we provide our members with the platform to offer our clients the highest levels of service.

We aim to continually improve the quality of service we provide by monitoring and measuring our performance and by actively seeking constructive feedback.

When we do something well, we inform all our people and we make sure we keep doing it; and when we need to change, we make sure that we address the root causes and find better ways to work.



Who are we?

Integrity in everything



We always behave with honesty and respect towards our clients, fellow barristers, solicitors and each other.

Commitment to quality



Everyone who comes into contact with us can be sure of work that is always of the highest standard.

A culture of support

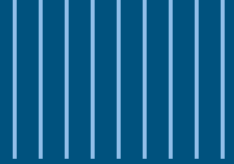


All our actions and conversations cultivate an environment that is supportive, understanding and respects confidentiality.

Putting people first



We have a working culture that is flexible, diverse and caring, so that all our people can flourish, and every client knows that they are in good hands.



Because we are family law specialists our focus and resources are not split across several practice areas.

Our clarity of purpose has meant that average income per member has increased by 27% over the last five years.

Wellbeing is paramount and our members are encouraged to take more time out of court, this translates to members taking on average two and a half weeks more time away from work per year than five years ago.

Practice development is key, our team works together with individual members to develop short, medium and long term plans for career progression.

Our clerking team provide effective administrative support, pro-active diary management, and highly efficient credit control.

We recently moved to new premises designed specifically for the needs of a modern family law chambers; offering professional yet comfortable working spaces backed by cutting edge web conferencing equipment.

We have invested in IT to provide case and document management systems which are accessible anywhere from virtually any type of device, making it possible to easily work wherever suits you.

Former members have taken up posts as Designated Family Judges and lead Financial Remedies Court Judges in courts both local and further afield, six current members hold part-time judicial post.

Finances

Contributions to expenses are calculated based on a percentage of monthly receipts together with a fixed monthly sum which covers the base costs of tenancy such as IT and regulatory costs.

The Management Committee set contribution levels before the start of each financial year in order to meet our planned budgetary expenditure. Members are encouraged to raise issues or concerns in advance either by email or by anonymous message.

There is no large up-front cost to joining us, nor at any other point during tenancy. We lease our office space, so you don't need to buy a share of the building. All you pay is a percentage of your income on a monthly basis and the fixed monthly sum.

Highly efficient credit control and debt management systems ensure early payment. On average in the last financial year private clients paid within 13 days and local authority clients paid within 26 days.

Fee scales which illustrate our pricing strategy for all non-legal aid work are available to all members.

All scales are reviewed annually based on available data on hours of work involved in preparation and attendance on cases and on the input of clerks, members, and clients.

We designed automated systems to ensure private client and local authority invoices are sent as soon as possible with 94% of private client invoices and 90% of local authority invoices sent within 7 days of work being completed.





Diary

When available to work barristers are engaged 92% of the time.

Our clerks at St. Mary's have over 90 years of combined experience, ensuring barristers are engaged in desired work through proactive diary management.

They facilitate breaks when needed and maintain updated schedules through regular reminders to solicitors for effective preparation.

A significant portion of inquiries aligns with unallocated work, distributed according to our Fair Allocation of Work policy.

Income is up and planned time away from work is also up – wellbeing strategies and proactive practice management produces better results for all.

Our expense structure, based on a percentage of income, allows flexible work for members. We support barristers in taking career breaks for family, teaching, or travel, facilitating their return to the Bar, whether full-time or part-time.

Recognising that each barrister's journey is unique, we encourage individuals to pursue their own goals. Members have the freedom to choose the type of work they want, without being forced into areas of law they're not interested in.

Our maternity and parental leave policies offer comprehensive support, including reduced or zero expense contributions to alleviate financial stress.

Our clerks manage individual diaries to accommodate each barrister's needs.

Facilities

We recently moved into leased offices which have been newly converted and designed to our specification.

Specialist web conferencing equipment has been installed to provide high quality remote court hearing and conference facilities.

Multi-use meeting rooms provide modern, bright, and airy spaces for quiet solo working, for traditional face to face meetings, or for remote meetings and court appearances.

These rooms also offer the perfect solution for dispute resolution services such as Private FDR hearings or arbitrations.

Energy efficient air conditioning and heating equipment ensures that workspaces are comfortable regardless of the weather.

We've invested in high quality furniture and equipment and have secured the premises for at least the next ten years.



Technology

We have IT facilities and systems in place to actively support paperless working.

All incoming case documents are managed using a strict naming convention to make it clear exactly what they are, they are then uploaded to our document management systems by the clerking team.

The documents are stored on Microsoft cloud-based servers allowing ease of access through OneDrive and the highest levels of security.

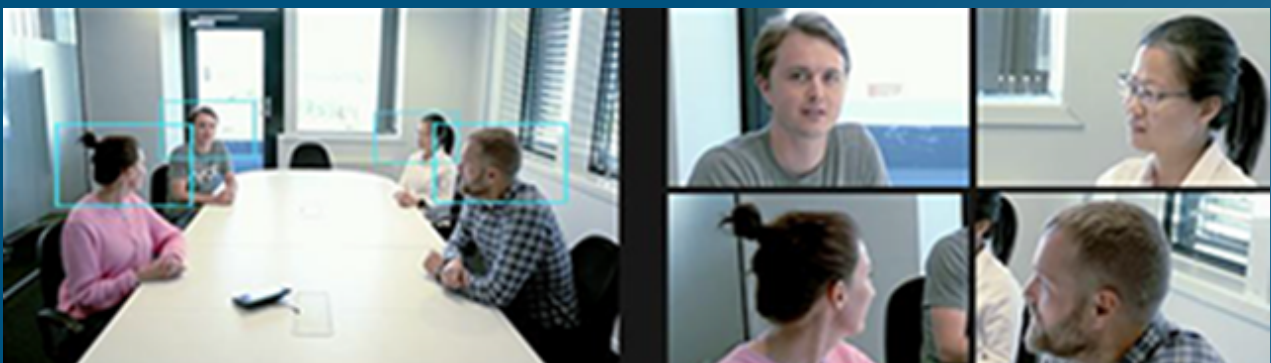
This allows our barristers the option to work from home, from Chambers, or whatever location best suits their needs.

All members are provided with a full Office 365 license which gives the user the entire Microsoft suite of programs which can be loaded onto five different devices.

We have outsourced our IT support to a provider who offer dedicated support both remotely and in-person where required.



Meeting rooms can be booked for remote hearings, conferences, or just as a quiet working space using an online booking app or via the room control panels.



The web conferencing equipment has six cameras in each device, each of which will focus on a participant in the room.

This makes joining CVP and other remote court hearings a much better experience for the judiciary and other parties.

Business Development

We employ various marketing strategies to promote our Chambers and members. Members contribute to monthly case law updates, covering significant judgments in Public Law, Private Law Children, and Financial Remedies, distributed to 2,000 subscribers and gaining up to 1,500 social media impressions per post.

We arrange annual conferences for each of our core practice areas – Financial Remedies, Public Law and Private Law Children. These have become a fixture in the calendar of practitioners across the Midlands and beyond and are usually sold-out events. We provide bespoke in-house training for our instructing solicitors on a variety of topics, and will help you make in-roads with potential clients in the practice areas you want to develop your practice in.

The Business Development team focuses on building connections and client service reviews, prioritising client needs. Regular Practice Review meetings ensure effective promotion by aligning with members' goals.

At the pandemic's onset, we adapted to remote work by establishing hearing hubs for clients and barristers to enhance communication during remote hearings.

Today, we still use these hubs with advanced web conferencing tools for a better experience. We lead in promoting dispute resolution services, offering Private FDR and Arbitration as alternatives to traditional court hearings.

The future of family law will blend traditional and alternative solutions, necessitating both in-person and remote services, and we aim to remain at the forefront of these developments.



Diversity

Our [diversity data](#) shows that as an organisation we are reasonably diverse, but we felt we could do more.

Using the Bar Council diversity tool kit, we have created an action plan to ensure that we are doing all we can to improve diversity in Chambers and more generally at the Bar.

We implemented a range of new measures to promote and improve diversity. We have reviewed all our existing policies and procedures to ensure fairness for all.

This included improving the terms of our maternity leave package so that members pay no contributions to expenses for the period of maternity leave where they are not working. We set no fixed time limit on this non-working period. Upon return-to-work members are eligible for reduced contributions for up to two years.

Fair allocation of work is key to ensuring all barristers are treated fairly, we have a robust policy in place which all our clerks and members adhere to.



Growth

We have been following a strategic growth plan for several years which has been part of our continued success.

Over the last five years turnover has increased by 37% and membership has grown by 17%.

We normally recruit two pupils a year and train our future members not only in family law but also in the St. Mary's ethos.

We are always looking for new members to join us whether they be established barristers or solicitors wishing to transfer.

Of our current members five have successfully made the switch from solicitor.

We are also interested in applications from barristers who practise in other areas of law but are looking to specialise in family law.

We have recently supported two of our current members to transfer from criminal law to family law.





Administration

Transparency is the cornerstone of how we manage our administration.

The Management Committee usually meets monthly and produce an agenda in advance of each meeting.

Members are encouraged to raise issues or concerns in advance either by email or by anonymous message.

All reports prepared for ManCom meetings are circulated with the minutes normally within 7 days of the meeting.

We have two full chambers meeting a year which all members are required to attend.

Since the start of the pandemic these meetings have taken place remotely and there are no plans to return to in person.

Members are encouraged to be involved in the various committees that assist Management Committee and in the sharing of all responsibilities that contribute to the continued success of Chambers.

St. Mary's became a limited company in 2022 in order to better meet the demands of the modern commercial world and to provide greater security to our members.

The Management Committee act as the directors of St. Mary's Chambers Ltd.

Application Process

Initial enquiries should be made to [Tim Smith](#) who will be able to guide you through what we can offer you.

Any conversations about joining us will be in the strictest confidence and won't be discussed with anyone else unless and until you make a formal application to join.

Once you make an application this will be provided to our Recruitment Committee who will normally invite you for an interview.

They will then decide whether to make a recommendation to Chambers that you should be invited to join us.

Your application will then be circulated to all members and a decision will be made democratically.

If the committee decide not to make a recommendation to Chambers, then your application will remain confidential, and the details will not be circulated to Chambers.



St.Mary's

Contact Us

For an informal chat about what we can offer please contact Tim Smith

tim@stmarysfamily.co.uk

0115 678 1520

07896 596061

He will arrange to discuss any aspect of life at St. Mary's either in person or virtually at a time to suit you.

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