

Jonathan Laidlaw KC

Call: 1982 | Silk: 2008

"The Rolls Royce of the criminal bar... a star and at the top of his game..."

Chambers UK 2025 (Criminal Defence)



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Whilst Jonathan Laidlaw KC's practice is predominantly in business and financial crime where he has consistently been ranked by Chambers and Partners as one of their star silks, he is now rated in the directories as a leading silk in seven practice areas: financial and business crime; general crime; private prosecutions; health and safety; inquests and inquiries; professional discipline and regulatory law.

Previously a recipient of the "Crime Silk of the Year" award, the directories have spoken of him being "regularly instructed in headline-grabbing cases" who is, "also eminently well equipped to advise significant individuals on sensitive matters involving reputational issues". It has been said that he is "an extraordinarily able advocate with great style who can deal with the most difficult of cases with the greatest of ease" and that he has "lethal cross-examination skills and a mean way with closing speeches". He features in both the Sunday Times/Debretts list of the 500 most influential people in Britain today and the High Net Worth Guide.

Much of his work, both for individuals and companies here and abroad, is pre-charge and advisory in nature and Jonathan Laidlaw KC makes appearances in the Commercial Court, at major inquests and public inquiries and before sporting, regulatory and professional disciplinary tribunals. He is also asked to produce reports in silk-led inquiries.

He presently acts for several individuals who are the subject of SFO, FCA, NCA and DoJ investigations and for the Bank of England, Pret a Manger, The FA, Live Nation and Aviva. He has represented core participants or provided advice in the Grenfell Tower, Manchester Arena Bombing, COVID-19 and Post Office Horizon public inquiries and he advises a number of leading entrepreneurs considering bringing private prosecutions.

Expertise

Business Crime & Financial Services

Chambers and Partners have consistently rated Jonathan Laidlaw KC as one of their star silks in financial crime.

He represented GSK in their hearing before the Divisional Court; for Allseas SA in their prosecution of those responsible for a €100 fraud

upon the company; for subjects in the SFO's investigations into Rolls Royce and ENRC; for the CEO of the casino in the Summit Partners case; for PCP in the Barclays litigation; for the Bank of England in its investigation into the former Barclays CEO Jess Staley's alleged misrepresentation of his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein; for Boris Becker; and for Andy Pilley the owner of a major utilities company and League One football club.

Jonathan Laidlaw KC presently acts for several individuals who are the subject of a number of SFO, FCA, NCA and DoJ investigations along with the ex-Nigerian Minister for Petroleum Resources.

The 2025 Chambers and Partners Guide (2025) says, "*Jonathan is a go-to barrister for complex financial crime cases. He has unparalleled expertise, marked out by a commanding presence in court along with practical wisdom and assurance to clients*" and they describe him as "... an exceptional advocate ... he has exceptional cross-examination skills."

Consumer & Trading Standards

Amongst a number of companies Jonathan Laidlaw KC has acted for in respect of food safety, including the Euro Food Groups, is Pret a Manger, who he represented in the prosecution of the company for breaches of the Food Safety Act before Bristol Crown Court and in the inquest into the circumstances of Celia Marsh's death.

Amongst the Trading Standards investigations in which Jonathan Laidlaw KC has acted for the defence, was the prosecution of Andrew Pilley (the owner of a major utilities company and a League One football club) for fraudulent trading arising from the mis-selling of energy contracts and Shahid Malik (formerly a Labour MP) in the case to be prosecuted by West Yorkshire Trading Standards.

Chambers and Partners have said of him, he "is an experienced criminal and regulatory silk ... who is ... so smart and has an amazing ability to assimilate information in a short amount of time and pull it all together in court" and says, "He is excellent with clients and very persuasive when addressing an audience".

Criminal Defence

Chambers and Partners have consistently rated Jonathan Laidlaw KC as one of their star silks in crime and he is a previous recipient of the crime silk of the year award.

During his time as Treasury Counsel, Jonathan Laidlaw KC gained almost unrivalled experience in the most demanding and serious cases brought in this country during that 15 year period: from the first war crimes prosecution; the PIRA bombing of Canary Wharf trial; the Official Secrets Act prosecutions of both Tomlinson and Shayler; the Jill Dando murder trials; the CCRC reference to the Court of Appeal in the case of Jeremy Bamber; the prosecution of corrupt police officers; the prosecution of Barot and others (the al-Qaeda cell who had planned pre 9/11 attacks in the US and then bombings in this country); the al-Qaeda attack in London and on Glasgow Airport through to and including, the prosecuting of allegations of corruption against a CPS lawyer; a Saudi Prince for murder; a former BA employee charged with terrorist offences; and Delroy Grant (the 'Night Stalker').

He also appeared in the House of Lords and frequently represented the Attorney General in the Court of Appeal. Jonathan Laidlaw KC's involvement in prosecution work extended to advising various Government departments and the intelligence agencies.

Jonathan Laidlaw KC has acted for the UK Government in Karadzic's case in the Hague; for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the Miranda/Guardian case before the Divisional Court; for JC Decaux; for Rebekah Brooks in the phone-hacking trial; for Andrew Fitch-Holland in the cricket match-fixing trial; for a major property developer in a series of long-running trials in Liverpool.

More recently Jonathan Laidlaw KC acted for Dr Agnes Taylor (the ex-wife of Charles Taylor) who faced charges of torture said to have been committed during the first Liberian civil war in 1990. Her case went to the Supreme Court and was then remitted back to the

Central Criminal Court for a further hearing at which all the charges she faced were dismissed. He also represented Operation Kenova into its investigation in Northern Ireland and Boris Becker at his trial.

Chambers and Partners Guide (2025) describe Jonathan Laidlaw KC as *“the Rolls-Royce of the criminal bar who can turn his hand to any case. He is a suave operator and delivers every single time.”* They also say he is *“a star practitioner”* and *“at the top of his game”*.

Environmental

Jonathan Laidlaw KC, as an adjunct to his Health and Safety and Food Safety practice, has also represented a number of companies charged with breaches of pollution and waste management regulations.

Chambers and Partners have previously described him as “A superb KC and a strategic mastermind” and Legal 500 have said “Jonathan is simply the best. He puts clients at ease in difficult circumstances, has a clear approach and articulate positions concisely. He is absolutely the one you want on your side!”

Health & Safety

Throughout his career, Jonathan Laidlaw KC has maintained a health and safety practice appearing for a large number of corporate clients which include Texaco, Gulf, BOC, Ford, Southern Cross, Esso, BHP Billiton, Fluor, Marwood and Merck.

In recent years he has defended BHP Billiton in a series of cases brought by the DTI, the MCA and the HSE arising from incidents in the Liverpool Bay field; acted for Southern Cross in cases involving fatalities in their care homes; defended Fluor in a prosecution arising from the construction of the Inoes Chlor plant in Warrington; defended Marwood Limited; defended one of the directors in Lion Steel one of the first corporate manslaughter trials; defended the Ancient Order of Foresters; represented Cape Industries facing charges arising from a fatality; appeared for the Princes Sporting Club who faced corporate manslaughter charges; for Monovan Construction Limited, the first company to be sentenced under the revised Sentencing Council Guideline; for JTF Wholesale who face corporate manslaughter charges and BAM, Ferrovia and Kier following a fatality on the Cross Rail project.

His present workload in this area includes acting for Pret a Manger, for Harley Facades, the cladding company in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and for Showsec in the Manchester Arena Bombing Inquiry and AMG in the Brixton Academy investigation.

Jonathan Laidlaw KC has twice been nominated by Chambers and Partners as *“Health and Safety Silk of the Year”*.

The Chambers and Partners Guide (2025) say of Jonathan Laidlaw KC that he *“is a go-to health and safety leader”* and that he *“is fantastic ... a brilliant KC who always understands issues as they impact the client”*.

Inquests

Apart from his advisory and trial advocacy work, Jonathan Laidlaw KC also makes appearances in inquests. He has represented, by way of example, the US company Fluor in the Greater Gabbard Wind Farm Inquest; The FA in the Hillsborough Inquests; Statoil in the In Amenas Inquests; and Pret A Manger in their recent Bristol inquest. He presently acts for AMG in the Brixton Academy investigation and has experience in military inquests and coronial inquisitions arising from deaths overseas.

The Chambers and Partners Guide (2025) describe Jonathan Laidlaw KC as *“a standout barrister in the field”*.

Public Inquiries

In addition to his advisory and trial advocacy work, Jonathan Laidlaw KC also acts in public inquiries. He represented core participants in the Grenfell Tower and the Manchester Arena Bombing inquiries and he currently advises parties in the Post Office Horizon Inquiry and the COVID Inquiry.

The Chambers and Partners Guide (2025) describe Jonathan Laidlaw KC as “a standout barrister in the field. He has been a leader in public inquiries and police investigations.”

Private Prosecution

Formerly a First Senior Treasury Counsel, Jonathan Laidlaw KC has been described as the most sought-after silk in this area, following the success of the Allseas case – the biggest fraud case brought by way of a private prosecution and Supreme’s case which also resulted in convictions.

In recent years Jonathan Laidlaw KC has advised a number of successful claimants in Commercial Court proceedings in respect of the bringing of private prosecutions including Highland (the Texas hedge fund) and more recently (and apart from the Allseas case and the case for Supreme) he acted for an accountant whose case, brought by way of private prosecution, was stayed for abuse, as was another case brought against the Bank of Beirut and for the CEO of the casino in the Summit Partners case which resulted in all those charges being dismissed. He presently advises a number of individuals and major companies (both here and abroad) as to the viability of both bringing and defending against private prosecutions following commercial litigation in London.

The Chambers and Partner Guide (2025) speaks of Jonathan as, “*an incredible advocate. He is fantastic in every way*”, “*a very user-friendly silk; approachable, strategic and knowledgeable*” and “*super impressive and smooth, very qualified and a very nice man*”.

Professional Discipline

Jonathan Laidlaw KC has recently received instructions in high profile professional discipline cases requiring specialist advocacy skills including the Baker McKenzie case before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and for senior members of the bar facing proceedings before the Disciplinary Tribunal of the Council of the Inns of Court.

Legal 500 (2025) describe Jonathan Laidlaw JC’s advocacy as “*always measured, well considered and persuasive*”.

Sports Law

Jonathan Laidlaw KC has considerable experience in the sporting field. For several years, he has acted for The FA in crowd control cases brought against Liverpool FC, Chelsea FC, West Ham FC and in the proceedings brought against Wayne Rooney’s agent Paul Stretford. He acted for the FA in their investigation of the racist remarks made by John Terry and appeared for the regulator in the cases brought against Jay Rodriguez, Jose Mourinho, Jurgen Klopp and Mikel Arteta.

He represented the trainer Jim Best in his hearings before the BHA, for one of Sheikh Mohammed’s trainers before the same body and the International Association of Athletics Federations in a CAS hearing in Lausanne where the appellants were seeking to set aside findings that they were guilty of extorting monies in return for the suppression of doping sanctions against the Russian marathon runner, Liliya Shobukhova.

Chambers and Partners described him as a “*great advocate*” and said he is, “*a formidable advocate ... one of the pre-eminent fraud and sports law silks*”, “*great for a scrap – very able and very smooth*” and a “*class act*”.