

## Jonathan Laidlaw KC

"A Rolls-Royce of the criminal Bar. He is polished, incredibly smooth and just brilliant."  
Chambers UK 2023



Year of Call: 1982    KC: 2008

020 7353 5324

Whilst Jonathan Laidlaw KC's practice is predominantly in business and financial crime where he has consistently been ranked by Chambers as one of their star silks, he is also rated in the directories as a leading silk in the areas of private prosecutions, general crime, health and safety, inquests and inquiries and sport. Previously a recipient of the *"Crime Silk of the Year"* award, the directories have described him as *"an exceptional silk who provides superlative client care and commands the authority of the court with his formidable advocacy"*. They have spoken of him being *"an outstanding advocate ... 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 the Sunday Times/Debretts list of the 500 most influential people in Britain today.

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 inquiries and before sporting and professional disciplinary tribunals. He is also asked to produce reports in silk-led internal inquiries.

He presently acts for a number of individuals who are the subject of SFO, FCA and DoJ investigations; for the Bank of England; for Pret a Manger; for The FA and Chelsea Football Club; for core participants in both the Grenfell Tower and the Manchester Arena Bombing inquiries; he advises a number of leading entrepreneurs considering bringing private prosecutions; and acts on Operation Kenova's behalf in Northern Ireland.

## Business Crime & Financial Services

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Chambers rate Jonathan Laidlaw KC as one of their star silks in financial crime.

More recently he has acted for the Bank of England; he represented GSK in their hearing before the Divisional Court; for Allseas SA in their successful prosecution of those responsible for a €100 fraud upon the company; for subjects in the SFO's investigations into Rolls Royce; for the CEO of the casino in the Summit Partners case which resulted in all charges being dismissed against him; for PCP in the Barclays litigation; and for Boris Becker.

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Jonathan Laidlaw KC presently acts for the subjects of a number of SFO, FCA and DoJ investigations including ENRC along with the owner of an energy supplier in a major fraud investigation.

The 2020 Chambers and Partners said Jonathan Laidlaw KC *“is a class act, who’s very smooth in his presentation and very practical”* and *“he gets the message over in a very charming way – he’s got a very nice way of phrasing things and an effective way of communicating with the court.”*

The 2021 guide described him as *“a stellar criminal silk and his advocacy is superb. One of his great skills is that he can really put together a case theory that appeals to a jury or judge and comes up with a coherent case strategy”*.

The 2022 Legal 500 guide said *“A silk who remains serene under pressure, with a strong command of his brief. He is fantastic with clients, particularly in terms of being firm and confident in his advice whilst at the same time empathetic to the client’s position and circumstances.”* and *“Preeminent in this field”*.

The 2023 Legal 500 guide says *“Jonny is a brilliant advocate and a great joy to work with. He is also supported by a truly market leading team. He’s fantastic across all areas of financial crime and on big judgment calls he is excellent.”* and *“top-drawer, he works incredibly hard but makes it look effortless. Always on top of his brief and takes responsibility for all of the big calls on his cases.”*

The 2023 Chambers UK guide also says, *“Jonathan Laidlaw KC is a top barrister with a wide-ranging practice in financial crime. Having served as First Senior Treasury Counsel, he has in recent years been involved in major SFO investigations into alleged corruption and market manipulation offences. He is highly rated for his defence of directors and companies facing fraud charges ...”*. Amongst the testimonials it has been said he, *“understands the commercial side of things. He does a great job in court”, “is a great strategist”* and *“is an expert in the field”*.

## Criminal Defence

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Chambers 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 Qa’eda cell who had planned pre 9/11 attacks in the US and then bombings in this country); the al Qa’eda 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 department and the intelligence agencies.

In recent years Jonathan Laidlaw KC (who no longer acts for the public prosecutors) 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; and for Keith Vaz.

More recently Jonathan Laidlaw KC acted for Dr Agnes Taylor (the ex-wife of Charles Taylor) who faced charges

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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. Jonathan Laidlaw KC continues to represent Operation Kenova into its investigation (amongst others) of the activities of the alleged agent “Steak Knife” in Northern Ireland and he represented Boris Becker at his trial.

The 2019 guide said, *“he represents both individuals and companies in a vast range of complex criminal matters ... One of the top five criminal advocates in the country. He is really something special; a fantastic advocate.”*

The 2020 guide said, *“an exceptionally talented advocate who is brilliant with clients”* and *“absolutely at the top of his game”*. It speaks of him being, *“a superb advocate and first class in terms of the service he provides for both clients and solicitors. He offers in-depth analysis of all the issues that arise within the course of proceedings.”*

The 2021 guide said, *“a first-class advocate who provides highly valuable strategic input”* and speaks of him being *“sublime to work with [who makes] connections like you would not believe. Fantastic.”*

The 2022 guide said, *“a stellar silk...his advocacy is superb...fantastic.”*

The 2023 guide describes Jonathan Laidlaw KC as *“a Roll-Royce of the criminal Bar. He is polished, incredibly smooth and just brilliant”*.

## Criminal Regulatory

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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 successfully defended BHP Billiton in a series of cases brought by the DTI, the MCA and the HSE arising from incidents at the Liverpool Bay field, acted for Southern Cross in cases involving fatalities in their care homes; successfully defended Fluor in a prosecution arising from the construction of the Inoes Chlor plant in Warrington; successfully defended Marwood Limited in a case which was to have been tried in Bradford; successfully defended one of the directors in Lion Steel one of the first corporate manslaughter trials; successfully 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 new Sentencing Council Guideline; for JTF Wholesale who face corporate manslaughter charges and BAM, Ferrovian 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/Live Nation in the Manchester Arena Bombing Inquiry.

The 2021 guide said, *“his knowledge is incredible, and he is able to identify and focus on the key points in the case. He’s a very reassuring presence for the client”* and *“he has a lot of gravitas in the market, tactically he’s very good and he know the health and safety sphere well”* and *“he is superb in court”*.

In 2022 he was once again nominated by Chambers and Partners as *“Health and Safety Silk of the Year”*.

The 2023 guide says, *“Jonathan Laidlaw KC is an expert advocate, lauded for the breath of his expertise in health and safety cases ... He defends companies and directors in regulatory, disciplinary and professional matters, and regularly acts for those facing prosecution by the HSE. He is now highly sought after in the US market to represent*

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*corporates facing health and safety prosecutions, particularly those concerning corporate manslaughter*". Amongst the testimonials it has been said *"Jonathan has a deep knowledge and ability to predict, anticipate and navigate safely through some complex issues"*, *"he leads the case from a strategic and tactical point of view"*, *"he is excellent with clients"* and *"Jonathan has an amazing ability to assimilate information in a short space of time and pull it all together in court"*.

## Inquests & Public Inquiries

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Apart from advisory and trial advocacy work, Jonathan Laidlaw KC also makes appearances in inquests and acts in public inquiries. Most recently he has represented Fluor in the Greater Gabbard Wind Farm Inquest, The Football Association in the Hillsborough Inquests, Statoil in the In Amenas Inquests, core participants in the Grenfell Tower and the Manchester Arena Bombing inquiries and Pret a Manger in the Bristol Inquest. He also has experience in military inquests and coronial inquisitions arising from deaths overseas.

The 2020 Chambers and Partners guide said, *"he brings a very good criminal law approach to handling an inquest and knows what may happen afterwards as well."*

The 2021 guide stated, *"he is a class act in dealing with very, very tricky cases"* and *"he excels in his advocacy"*.

The 2023 guide says. *"Jonathan Laidlaw KC is an experienced criminal and regulatory silk who is frequently instructed in significant inquests and public inquiries ... he regularly advises businesses and regulators in such matters"*. The guide described him as *"so smart and [having] 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"*.

## Private Prosecution

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### Financial Crime

Formerly a First Senior Treasury Counsel, Jonathan Laidlaw KC has been described as the leading and 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 resulted in convictions in the summer of 2021. He now advises both individuals and major companies (both here, in the US and in Russia) as to the viability of both bringing and defending against private prosecutions following commercial litigation in London.

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 Allseas SA in their successful prosecution of Paul Sultana following two long trials at Southwark Crown Court. More recently he acted for an accountant whose case, brought by way of private prosecution, was stayed for abuse and for the CEO of the casino in the Summit Partners case which resulted in all those charges being dismissed.

The 2023 Chambers UK guide says, *"Jonathan Laidlaw KC is a top barrister with a wide-ranging practice in financial crime. Having served as First Senior Treasury Counsel, he has in recent years been involved in major SFO investigations into alleged corruption and market manipulation offences. He is highly rated for his defence of directors and companies facing fraud charges and is noted for his adept handling of cases involving private prosecutions"*. Amongst the testimonials it has been said he, *"understands the commercial side of things. He does a great job in court"*, *"is a great strategist"* and *"is an expert in the field"*.

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# Sports Law

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Jonathan Laidlaw KC has considerable experience in the sporting field. For several years, he has acted for the Football Association 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 assisted in the investigation of Cardiff City and of David Moyes, and appeared for the regulator in the cases brought against Jay Rodriguez and Jose Mourinho. He also represented the trainer Jim Best in his hearings before the British Horseracing Authority, 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 Shobukova.

Legal 500 have identified Jonathan Laidlaw KC as a leading silk in the area of professional discipline and regulatory law and have described him as a *"top-notch performer"* and as *"a well-respected silk with a niche in the sports world"*. They say, *"His strength is his advocacy, in particular, his cross-examination."*

Chambers and Partners described him as a *"great advocate"* and *"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"*.

## Professional Discipline

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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 to represent a senior member of the bar before the Disciplinary Tribunal of the Council of the Inns of Court.

## Accreditations

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Jonathan Laidlaw QC  
Health and Safety Silk of the Year



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## Appointments & Memberships

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- 2013: Head of Chambers
- 2008-2010: First Senior Treasury Counsel
- 2008: Queen's Counsel

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- 2000-2008: Senior Treasury Counsel
- 1995-2000: Junior Treasury Counsel
- 1995: Recorder
  
- Criminal Bar Association
- Private Prosecution Association
- Fraud Lawyers Association
- Health & Safety Lawyers Association
- South Eastern Circuit

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