

Jonathan Laidlaw KC

“An incredible advocate ... fantastic in every way.”
“Simply the best ... there is a reason he is constantly involved in the biggest cases.”
Chambers UK 2024
Legal 500 UK 2024



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 now rated in the directories as a leading silk in six practice areas: general crime, private prosecutions, health and safety, inquests and inquiries and professional discipline and regulatory crime.

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

He presently acts for a number of individuals who are the subject of SFO, FCA, NCA and DoJ investigations; for the Bank of England; for Pret a Manger; for The FA, for Live Nation; for core participants in the Grenfell Tower, Manchester Arena Bombing public 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

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

More recently 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

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against him; for PCP in the Barclays litigation; he acted for the Bank of England in its investigation into the former Barclays CEO Jess Staley's alleged misrepresentation of his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein; and for Boris Becker.

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

The 2023 Chambers guide said, "*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 other testimonials in that edition it was said he, "*understands the commercial side of things. He does a great job in court*" ... "*is a great strategist*" and "*an expert in the field*".

The 2024 guide says, "*Jonathan is an incredible advocate. He is fantastic in every way*" ... "*He is a very user-friendly silk. He is approachable, strategic and knowledgeable*" ... "*Super impressive and smooth, very qualified and a very nice man*".

Legal 500 (2024) say, "*Jonny is a go-to KC and the fact he is not only brilliant, but easy to work with makes him excellent for a range of clients. He is simply one of the greatest advocates around. There is a reason he is constantly involved in the biggest cases*" ... "*Gets straight to the heart of the issue with a minimum of fuss. A super advocate*".

Criminal Defence

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 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

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faced were dismissed. Jonathan Laidlaw KC continues to represent Operation Kenova into its investigation in Northern Ireland and he represented Boris Becker at his trial.

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

The 2024 Chambers guide says, *“Jonathan, Laidlaw KC is an impressive and highly regarded silk with over 15 years of Treasury Counsel experience, who now specialise only in private defence work spanning the areas of general crime ... among others. He represents both individuals and companies in a vast range of complex criminal matters. Laidlaw is an expert in both domestic and international criminal cases” ... “Jonny is a leader in general crime. His experience ... is revered by clients, and something that elevates his defence practice” and “At the top of the tree, he is analytical, persuasive, and great with the jury”*.

Legal 500 (2024) say, *“He has an immense ability to retain both specific facts as well as the bigger picture of cases. He is brilliant with clients, especially when a difficult message has to be conveyed. He is also flexible and does not get offended when challenged or asked to back up his view”*.

Criminal Regulatory

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, 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/Live Nation in the Manchester Arena Bombing Inquiry and the Brixton Academy investigation.

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

The 2023 Chambers guide said, *“Jonathan Laidlaw KC is an expert advocate, lauded for the breadth 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 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”*.

The 2024 Chambers guide say, *“A superb KC and a strategic mastermind” ... “Jonathan has an excellent reputation”*.

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Legal 500 say, *“Jonathan is a master of advocacy. He is a force to be reckoned with and leads the way in this field.”*

Inquests & Public Inquiries

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

The 2023 Chambers guide said, *“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”*.

The 2024 Chambers guide says, *“Jonathan provides excellent courtroom advocacy, and is effective in his support” ... “He is a good advocate, and clients clearly think highly of him”*.

Legal 500 (2024) say, *“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!”*.

Private Prosecution

Financial Crime

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 an number, both 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 2023 Chambers guide said, *“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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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. He is listed by Legal 500 (2024) as a leading silk in this practice area.

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 assisted in the investigation of Cardiff City and of David Moyes, and appeared for the regulator in the cases brought against Jay Rodriguez, Jose Mourinho and Jurgen Klopp. He also 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 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” ... “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 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”.*

Accreditations



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SHORTLISTED UK BAR AWARDS 2022

Jonathan Laidlaw QC
Health and Safety Silk of the Year



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Appointments & Memberships

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