

## Jonathan Laidlaw QC

“One of the premier league players at the Bar.”  
Chambers UK 2021



Year of Call: 1982    QC: 2008

020 7353 5324

Whilst Jonathan Laidlaw QC’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 QC 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 the Bank of England, for a number of individuals who are the subject of SFO, FCA and DoJ investigations; for PCP in the Barclays litigation; for The FA and Chelsea FC; for Pret a Manger; for a core participant in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and in the Manchester Arena Bombing Inquiry; in a number of private prosecutions presently before the courts; and on Operation Kenova’s behalf in Northern Ireland.

## Business Crime & Financial Services

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

He acted for Kevin Burrage, the under-bond dealer, in one of the largest diversion frauds prosecuted in this country; for the director of a highly successful building and maintenance company who was acquitted following a long trial brought by the Central Fraud Group; for James McCormick who faced fraud charges relating to the sale of fake bomb detection equipment to the Iraq Government; for the CEO of a major logistics company who faced

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2 Hare Court  
Temple  
London  
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allegations of tax fraud.

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

At present he acts for the subjects of a number of SFO, FCA, DoJ investigations including ENRC; for PCP in the Barclays litigation; and for the owner of a major energy supplier in a major fraud investigation.

The 2015 Chambers and Partners guide, in the Financial Crime chapter, said this of Jonathan Laidlaw QC, *"he is highly respected for his expertise in criminal fraud and regulatory issues. Often instructed in novel and challenging cases"* and those contributing to the guide say, *"he is unbeatable in my opinion. He is amongst the top QCs in the area"* and *"he is phenomenal"*.

In the 2016 guide it was said that Jonathan Laidlaw QC *"has a great mind, is incredibly well organised and is very approachable. He has great client skills and is a very strong advocate – he creates trust and has a very clear style"* and *"he is very level-headed and deals with cases on a very even keel. He works very methodically."*

The 2017 guide said he is a, *"very persuasive advocate with a sure touch. He's very, very user-friendly....Easy to work with, very responsive and extremely straightforward."*

The 2018 guide said of him, *"an absolute class act. He is very experienced, good with clients, and someone who really knows the criminal law inside and out....Clients love him. He is so hard-working, and he's just a phenomenal advocate....He combines commercial awareness with the legal ability that you are looking for in a case"*.

The 2019 guide said, *"an excellent advocate who offers a superb service to clients and provides in-depth analysis on all issues that arise in a case....He's an excellent jury advocate who is very bright"*.

The 2020 guide speaks of him as a *"top barrister with a wide-ranging practice in financial crime"* who *"has in recent years been involved in major SFO investigations into alleged corruption and market manipulation offences"* and who 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"*. He is said to be 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 says Jonathan Laidlaw is *"a very good advocate – intelligent but also very practical"* and describes him as *"one of the premier league players at the Bar."* He is further described as *"a formidable advocate and an exceptional silk"*, *"a true expert who gives very practical advice"*, having *"real integrity and [he] always finds the right note with the court"* and *"he is very hard-working and his court presence is second to none."*

## Criminal Defence

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Chambers have consistently rated Jonathan Laidlaw QC 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 QC 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;

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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 QC's involvement in prosecution work extended to advising various Government department and the intelligence agencies.

In recent years Jonathan Laidlaw QC 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 QC 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. Jonathan Laidlaw QC also acted for the CPS in the prosecution of the three young men accused of PC Harper's murder and he continues to represent Operation Kenova into its investigation (amongst others) of the activities of the alleged agent "Stakeknife" in Northern Ireland.

The 2015 edition of Chambers and Partners said, *"he is fantastic. He's the hardest-working individual I have ever come across. The work he does is phenomenal. He is top-drawer."*

The 2016 edition said, *"he is very level-headed and always incredibly calm in a crisis. He is a forceful and effective advocate who is a joy to work with"* and *"he is an excellent advocate who is calm and who gives superb client care."*

The 2017 guide described Jonathan Laidlaw QC as a *"stand out silk....now specialising only in private defence work which spans the area of general crime, business crime, fraud and regulatory work, among others"*. Sources described him as *"superb"*, *"a class act"* and *"incredibly impressive"*.

The 2018 guide said, *"As big a name as there is....He's straightforward in his approach and radiates authority in court."*

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 says he is, *"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 says this of Jonathan Laidlaw QC, *"if you are in trouble you want him on your side. He manages to harness passion better than anyone I have ever seen"* and *"he is superb on strategy and is excellent at pinning down the issues and focusing on what needs to be dealt with."*

## Private Prosecution

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Formerly a First Senior Treasury Counsel, Jonathan Laidlaw QC has been described as the leading and most

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sought after silk in this area, following the success of the Allseas case – the biggest fraud case brought by way of a private prosecution. 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 QC 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.

He presently acts for, amongst others, Oleg Deripaska and the Bank of Beirut in their on-going private prosecutions.

## Criminal Regulatory

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Throughout his career Jonathan Laidlaw QC 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 and for Harley Facades, the cladding company in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Chambers and Partners rate Jonathan Laidlaw QC as a band 1 silk and he is a previous nominee of *“Health and Safety Silk of the Year”*.

The 2015 edition was in these terms, *“Jonathan Laidlaw QC....is frequently involved in cases relating to the construction sector, and....receives a large number of instructions from US companies. Market sources speak about his practice in glowing terms and note his involvement in the leading corporate manslaughter cases of the day.”*

The 2016 edition said, *“he is a very good silk and criminal lawyer.” “He is a consistent performer at the highest level and engages as part of the team” and “Jonathan Laidlaw QC has gravitas and sound judgment. He is excellent with clients, approachable and available.”*

The 2017 guide said, he is a *“seriously impressive criminal silk who has a thriving health and safety practice. He undertakes all manner of health and safety work for a host of clients”* and describe him as a *“proper advocate in court, who has so much gravitas”*.

The 2018 guide said, he is a *“man of great authority whose preparation is immaculate. He’s a stickler for detail*

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*and picks up the important minutiae of a case”.*

The 2019 guide said, *“he is now highly sought after by the US market to represent US corporates facing health and safety prosecutions, particularly those concerning corporate manslaughter....Straight out of the top drawer....he’s a lawyer with fantastic advocacy skills, who is very measured and astute.”*

The 2020 edition of the guide says he is an *“expert advocate, lauded for his breadth of expertise in health and safety cases, public inquiries and inquests. 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”.*

The 2021 edition says this of Jonathan Laidlaw QC, *“he’s really impressive. He has excellent client care skills and is very reassuring. He also has a good eye for detail and knows the law inside out”* and *“has a brilliant mind, is very astute and is a skilled tactician.”*

## Inquests & Public Inquiries

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Apart from advisory and trial advocacy work, Jonathan Laidlaw QC 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 and a core participant in the Grenfell Tower and Manchester Arena bombing inquiries. He also has experience in military inquests and coronial inquisitions arising from deaths overseas.

In respect of the Hillsborough Inquests it was said in the 2016 Chambers and Partners Guide, *“he is absolutely fantastic in Hillsborough”* and that there he has been *“enormously impressive.”*

The 2017 guide said Jonathan Laidlaw QC is an *“experienced criminal and regulatory silk who is frequently instructed in significant inquests and public inquiries. He has considerable experience of inquests involving health and safety”* and describes him possessing *“enormous deftness of touch and skill in questioning”* with *“amazing gravitas”.*

The 2018 guide said, *“He has phenomenal client care and very good attention to detail. He is measured and makes himself available even though he is very busy. He instils confidence in the client....[a] great natural talent and authority. A massive breadth of experience of crime and regulation to draw upon.”*

The 2019 guide said, *“an experienced criminal and regulatory silk who is frequently instructed in significant inquests and public inquiries. He has considerable experience of inquests involving health and safety. He regularly advises businesses, regulators and inquiry chairs....His ability to master his brief and sheer attention to detail are very impressive”.*

The 2020 guide says, *“he brings a very good criminal law approach to handling an inquest and knows what may happen afterwards as well.”*

The 2021 guide says of Jonathan Laidlaw QC, *“An absolute pleasure to work with. He’s smart and sensible and will get the right result for client. A real standout practitioner.”*

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# Sports Law

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Jonathan Laidlaw QC 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 QC 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."*

The 2019 guide described him as a *"great advocate"* and the 2019 edition of Chambers said he is, *"a formidable advocate....One of the pre-eminent fraud and sports law QCs."*

The 2020 guide is in these terms; Jonathan Laidlaw QC is *"great for a scrap – very able and very smooth"* and a *"class act"*.

The Chambers 2021 guide says, *"he is an excellent advocate."*

## Professional Discipline

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Jonathan Laidlaw QC 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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## Appointments & Memberships

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- 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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