

## Rachel Sleeman

Head of Chambers and co-leader of the Commercial Division  
Called: 1996  
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"Absolute command of insolvency law and caselaw tempered with a commercial reality favoured by her peers and clients alike. Very personable and rare in the field as always makes time to have a 5 minute chat on a case which can prove inciteful and effective." Legal 500 (2025)



### PROFILE

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Rachel Sleeman is Head of Chambers and co-leader of the Commercial Division at Five Paper. She is an experienced commercial and chancery litigation barrister specialising in the fields of insolvency and asset recovery, including the cross over areas of company law and civil fraud.

Rachel has a busy advocacy practice in the High Court and the Court of Appeal, acting as sole and leading counsel. Rachel undertakes drafting and advisory work in all of her practice areas.

Clients appreciate Rachel's user-friendly approach and her ability to find commercially realistic solutions.

### EXPERTISE

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#### Insolvency & Company

Rachel acts for liquidators, administrators, receivers, directors and creditors in corporate insolvency matters both before a company enters into formal insolvency but also as part of the realisation, recovery and sale of assets process.

Rachel also advises on all aspects of personal insolvency. She has appeared in the leading reported cases dealing with bankrupts who are mentally incapacitated and also acts for creditors who wish to seek payments of debts from those who lack mental capacity.

Reported cases include:

- **Re: Premier FX Limited [2021] EWHC 1321 (Ch)** representing a creditor challenging a proposed Trust

Fund Distribution Plan.

- **Marquis Francois-Eudes de Louville de Toucy v (1) Bonhams 1793 Limited (2) The Official Receiver [2011] EWHC 3809 (Ch); (2011) All ER (D) 32 (Nov); Law Times Reports 10 December 2011**; Appeal against a bankruptcy order where the court had made the incapacitated debtor bankrupt without appointing a litigation friend or representative to act on the debtor's behalf.
- **Nicola Haworth v (1) Donna Cartmel (Trustee in bankruptcy of Nicola Haworth (2) The Commissioners of HM Revenue and Customs [2011] EWHC 36 (CH)**; Application to annul/rescind a bankruptcy order made over two years previously on the basis it should never have been made because the bankrupt lacked capacity and/or HMRC the petitioning creditor had breached its duties towards the bankrupt under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Other recent work:

- Multiple cases representing office holders in private examination hearings and seeking associated relief.
- Representing a bankrupt seeking to annul a bankruptcy order made against her whilst she lacked mental capacity.
- Acting for a liquidator pursuing the company's former directors for overdrawn director loan accounts and unlawful dividends.
- Challenge to office holder's fees and conduct in a CVL.
- Instructed by liquidator in misfeasance and wrongful trading claim against former director.
- Application for order for sale of bankrupt's home and associated business premises by trustees in bankruptcy dealing with an uncooperative bankrupt.
- Drafting a High Court appeal regarding an application to set aside a statutory demand on the basis of a substantial dispute, issues regarding a limitation defence and questions of security (leading Zachary Kell).

### *Company and Partnership*

Rachel represents and advises directors, shareholders and companies in fraud, breach of trust and fiduciary duty claims and unfair prejudice petitions.

Reported cases include:

- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 3475 (QB)**; leading Zachary Kell in successfully defending an appeal about meaning of "reasonable diligence" in section 32 of the Limitation Act 1980 where the Appellant argued that because the Respondent was a director and therefore, subject to the Companies Act 2006 duties he was legally obliged to make enquiries which would have uncovered the fraud.
- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 1183 (QB)**; leading Zachary Kell in summary judgment application brought in reliance on section 14A and section 32 of the Limitation Act 1980 in a fraud claim.
- **Bright Asset Ltd v Simon Lewis [2011] EWCA Civ 122**; Appeal about the interpretation of an agreement entered into between a shareholder and managing director of a failing company and a company providing corporate debt solutions.

Other recent work:

- Acting on behalf of a widow of the majority shareholder defending an unfair prejudice petition issued by another family member in respect of a group of companies following the majority shareholder's death.
- Representing a minority shareholder seeking relief having been excluded from the management of the company.
- Minority shareholder dispute where the central point of dispute concerned the basis of valuation owing

to the uncertainty of the success of the business after Brexit.

- Multi-million pound claim against former directors of charitable company for breach of statutory duty, negligence and fraud.

## Commercial

Rachel has particular experience in asset finance/factoring agreements and surrounding litigation; consumer lending transactions; enforcement of charges and costs disputes. She is regularly instructed by the Legal Aid Agency's Debt Recovery Department in costs and debt recovery claims.

Reported cases include:

- **Sriram v Revenue & Customs & Anor [2024] EWHC 853 (Ch)**; representing the bankrupt seeking to annul her bankruptcy on grounds it should not have been made owing to the bankrupt's lack of mental capacity.
- **Bhattacharya & Bhattacharya v Wright & ors [2023] EWHC 1353 (Ch)**; representing joint trustees in bankruptcy on an application to annul a bankruptcy.
- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 3475 (QB)**; leading Zachary Kell in successfully defending an appeal about the meaning of "reasonable diligence" in section 32 of the Limitation Act 1980.
- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 1183 (QB)**; leading Zachary Kell in summary judgment application brought in reliance on section 14A and section 32 of the Limitation Act 1980 in a fraud claim.
- **Lord Chancellor v John Blavo [2019] 6 WLUK 33**; Acted as Sole Counsel, representing the Lord Chancellor, was able to obtain a post-judgment worldwide freezing order against Mr. Blavo.
- **Lord Chancellor v (1) Blavo and Co Solicitors Ltd (in liquidation); (2) John Blavo [2018] EWHC 3556 (QB)**; Leading Counsel in a successful claim for over £22m against a solicitor in respect of monies dishonestly claimed from the Legal Aid fund.
- **Lord Chancellor v John Blavo [2016] EWHC 126 (QB)**; Application for a freezing order against a solicitor pending trial of a contractual claim.
- **Molobhoy and another v Kanani [2013] EWCA Civ 600**; Appeal about whether a summary judgment application can be heard at the same time as a Jurisdictional challenge.
- **Legal Services Commission v Sham Loomba; Legal Services Commission v Ngozi Blessing Ulasi; Legal Services Commission v Simon Anthony Carter & others [2012] EWHA 29 (QB)**; Junior Counsel for the LSC in three 'test cases' brought against solicitors to recover overpaid legal aid payments.

Other recent work:

- Third party costs order obtained against the director/sole shareholder ('controlling mind') of the unsuccessful Claimant company in a commercial dispute over unpaid invoices.
- Dispute between financial services company and account holders regarding a CFD (Contract for Difference) account and alleged regulatory breaches by the broker.
- Representing executor defending a claim being brought against her late husband's estate for business debt.
- Constructive trust dispute relating to monies paid by a property company to fund a construction redevelopment project.
- Advising in a proprietary estoppel claim being pursued by a beneficiary under a will.

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Other recent work:

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## Civil Fraud

Rachel is experienced with civil fraud matters, in relation to commercial, banking or corporate. Matters often involve allegations of breach of fiduciary duty and breach of trust, conspiracy, deceit and fraudulent misrepresentation. She is often instructed to obtain Freezing Orders (including where assets are based in other jurisdictions (worldwide)).

Reported cases:

- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 3475 (QB)**; leading Zachary Kell in successfully defending an appeal about meaning of “reasonable diligence” in section 32 of the Limitation Act 1980.
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Other recent work:

- Acting for the Claimant (ongoing, leading Matthew Tonnard) in a high-profile claim involving the alleged breach of fiduciary duty, breach of trust and unlawful means conspiracy regarding the use of funds advanced to a Multi-Academy Trust.

## FURTHER INFO

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### Directory Quotes



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**Legal 500 (2025)**

### Qualifications

King's College London – LLB; AKC. Leathes Prize.

### Seminars

Rachel Sleeman regularly presents seminars to solicitors. She co-presents MBL's "A Practical Guide to Factoring and Invoice Discounting" and was part of the panel of speakers for the LexisWebinar "Restructuring Dissolved Companies for Pursuing Claims and/or Distributing Property". Other talks include:

- Remedies in Minority Shareholder Petitions
- Third Party and Chabra Injunctions
- Private Examinations in Insolvency
- "Difficult Bankrupts" (for the R3 SPG Technical Review)
- Bankruptcy and Mental Incapacity Issues (for the Insolvency Practitioners Association)
- Insolvency Aspects of Factoring and Invoice Discounting

### Professional Memberships

She is a member of the Commercial Bar Association and the London Common Law and Commercial Bar Association. She is an Associate Member of R3 and a member of the Women's R3 London and South East Networking Group committee.