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Rachel Sleeman



Head of Chambers and co-leader of the Commercial Division
Called: 1996
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The Legal 500 (2026)

PROFILE

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

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:

- **Bishnupriya Bhattacharya & Nayantara Bhattacharya v Armstrong & Bouchier [2026] EWHC 533**

(Ch); representing joint trustees in bankruptcy in application made the daughters of two bankrupts to set aside the court's declaration as to ownership of a property and to be joined as parties to the application for an order for sale; abuse of process

- **Armstrong and Bouchier v Bhattacharya & Bhattacharya [2025] EWHC 597 (Ch);** representing joint trustees in bankruptcy in contested application for order for sale.
- **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
- **Bhattacharya & Bhattacharya v Wright & ors [2023] EWHC 1353 (Ch);** representing joint trustees in bankruptcy on an application to annul a bankruptcy.
- **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.
- Advising on multiple antecedent transactions claims in a high value bankruptcy
- 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.

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 counsel 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 counsel in summary judgment application brough 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:

- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 3475 (QB);** leading counsel 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 counsel 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.
- **Moloobhoy 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 propriety estoppel claim being pursued by a beneficiary under a will.

Company & 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:

- **ISC Europe Limited & Anor v Aliotta & others [2026] EWHC 533 (Ch);** representing fourth to sixth defendants in a section 423 Insolvency Act 1986 application concerning the sale and transfer of shares
- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 3475 (QB);** leading counsel 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 counsel 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.

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.
- **Arif v Sanger [2021] EWHC 1183 (QB);** leading Zachary Kell in summary judgment application brough 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 Solictors 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 where the court found that nonetheless there was a good arguable case of dishonesty.

Other recent work:

- Leading counsel for the Claimant in 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

Directory Quotes



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Qualifications

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

Professional Memberships

She is a member of the Commercial Bar Association, the London 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.

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