BRICK COURT
CHAMBERS

Brick Court Chambers
7-8 Essex Street, London WC2R 3LD
DX 302 London Chancery Lane

Tom Adam KC

YEAR OF CALL: 1991 **YEAR OF SILK**: 2008

"He is outstanding. I continue to think that he is the person I would least want to be against."

Chambers & Partners 2025

Clerk's Email: **PaulsClerkingTeam@brickcourt.co.uk**



Practice Overview

Tom Adam KC is well-known as a leading advocate in a broad range of heavy commercial work, from FSMA to reinsurance to energy JVs. He is a market leader in complex professional negligence/disciplinary matters, and is regularly instructed in matters involving leading City solicitors, the Big Four accountants and prominent members of the Bar. He has acted in many cases in the public eye including the phone hacking scandal; Takeover Panel proceedings; various film finance disputes; and the collapse of Carillion plc (acting as lead Counsel for the FRC in its investigations into the auditing). He has extensive experience of dealing with regulatory bodies in high profile disciplinary matters.

"Perennially brilliant – solicitors cannot express in words just how good he is." (Legal 500 2022)

At Cambridge he won prizes for light verse, oratory and academic performance as well as a Boxing Blue.

Commercial

General Commercial

- "Tom is excellent, hardworking and the most user-friendly KC I have ever worked with. He is no-nonsense, direct, inventive and creative - he will think outside the box to find ways to protect his client's interests." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Tom is a master of detail, who is extremely learned and gives real thought to his cases.

Terrific to work with and a real team player, he is fantastic in court and always respected by judges." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "He is excellent; hard-working and the most user-friendly KC I have ever worked with. He is excellent on his feet, and every time I see him in court he builds excellent rapport with judges." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Tom is fantastic. He is the master of detail; terrific to work with and a real team player. He is fantastic in court; meticulous, and judges listen to and respect him." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Tom is a very good advocate with a good turn of phrase, which is well judged. He has an air of gravity when needed but also humour to disarm in difficult moments; a class act." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Clients love him. He is no-nonsense and direct, but also inventive and creative. He will think outside the box to find ways to protect client interests." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Tom is simply outstanding. Brilliant strategy, always on top of the details, and a forceful advocate. A go-to KC." (Legal 500 2027)
- "Tom takes a hands-on approach and is all over the details – he doesn't just delegate everything to juniors. He is a commercial thinker who is really good with clients and good fun to work with." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- "He is scary in his brilliance." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- "Tom is a terrific advocate with a wonderful turn of phrase. He has good judgement as to when to press and when a lighter moment is more appropriate in court." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- "Tom is a truly outstanding advocate. He is funny, insightful and unbelievably hard-working. A serious player whom I would trust with serious work." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- ''He is one of the most impressive advocates at the top of his game.'' (Legal 500 2023)
- "Tom is fabulous. He is on top of every detail and a real performer in court." (Chambers & Partners 2023)
- "He prepares superbly, his advocacy is really impressive, and he considers every possible argument in a case. Tom is a real wordsmith, who comes up with just the right way of explaining points to the judge." (Chambers & Partners 2022)

- "Lives and breathes his cases, phenomenal advocate and does not spread himself thinly like others at his level." (Legal 500 2021)
- "Tom Adam KC gets under the skin of a case and advocates superbly, showing great judgement as to which points to take and which to leave." (Chambers & Partners UK & Global 2019)
- "He's got a really excellent style in court, he's very good with clients, and he gives robust, clear advice." "A good cross-examiner with great knowledge of the case." (Chambers & Partners 2018)

Tom's recent general commercial cases include a 2 week arbitration dispute between oligarchs in late 2017, in which Tom obtained a substantial award for his client (this was then turned into an order of the Commercial Court, resulting in the issue of a freezing order and payment in short order), and Holyoake v Candy [2017] 2 All ER (Comm) 513, in which Tom (instructed to come in at the appellate stage) over-turned a novel form of freezing injunction granted against the Candy brothers by the Chancery Division; the Court of Appeal accepted that the Judge had both applied the wrong legal test and misunderstood the facts.

Some recent cases:

- Allianz Global Investors v RSA Insurance Group plc [2021] EWHC 2950 (Ch), [2021] EWHC 3091 (Ch) and [2021] EWHC 570 (Ch). Leading Counsel for RSA in resisting FSMA s90A fraud claims advanced by institutional investors.
- Blue Power Group Sarl v ENI SpA [2020] EWHC 633 (Ch). Leading Counsel for ENI in a dispute over a joint venture to develop new methods of compressing and transporting gas from oil fields.
- Holyoake v Candy [2017] 2 All ER (Comm) 513. Instructed at the appellate stage and overturned a novel form of freezing injunction granted below against the Candy brothers.

Professional negligence

Awarded "Professional Negligence Silk of the Year" by Chambers & Partners for 2022.

- "He is one of the leading professional negligence barristers I have worked with. He has a tremendously powerful presence in court, is a staunch advocate for the client, brings a profound and enduring understanding of professional negligence law and practice, and has expertise in tax-related matters." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Tom is one of the most active silks in the sphere, particularly on the financial side. He has

broad expertise." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "He is all over the detail and thought through every single permutation and difficulty. The advice is so beautifully presented and very clear; he tries to make things happen and to find answers. He is great fun to work with." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "If I'm in trouble and I need senior silk who will be all over it, he is my man of choice. If you instruct him, you have got it. He turns over every single difficulty and problem. I enjoy his emails because they simplify everything and go through layers of analysis. He is pragmatic and happy to help out." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Tom is definitely the silk you want to have on your side. He is dynamic, incisive, and clear-thinking. Altogether brilliant." (Legal 500 2027)
- "Tom Adam KC typically advises on professional negligence matters relating to solicitors or barristers, insurance brokers and accountancy firms. He is known for the breadth of his commercial practice and wins praise for his ability to handle highly complicated cases." (Chambers&Partners2026)
- "Tom is one of the best there is in the commercial litigation market. He has clear views, offers excellent legal and strategic guidance." (Legal 500 2026)
- "He's a joy to work with: he's phenomenally clever, very robust, and always takes a view on the merits of the case." (Chambers & Partners 2023)
- ''Tom is a brilliant lawyer and sees the issues in the case with great clarity. This is invaluable in setting strategy. He is a delight to work with and never fails to let you know precisely what he is thinking. A real star of his generation.'' (Legal 500 2023)
- "One of the professional negligence heavy-hitters, he is absolutely brilliant in terms of technical ability and advocacy. If Tom is in the case you definitely want him on your side." "Tom is a first-rate advocate and he's prepared to stand his ground with a tricky court. Easy and helpful to work with. I would recommend him for difficult matters." (Chambers & Partners 2022)
- "Tom is one of the cleverest and most forceful silks I know. He is a delight to work with. He has very considerable experience in relation to the largest professional liability disputes. He never sits on the fence in terms of his advice which is always clear and well considered." (Legal 500 2021)
- "He is very good fun to work with: he brings a real energy and sense of fun to the team and is very good at reading the court and fighting his corner." "He is a very robust, sound, clever silk." (Chambers & Partners 2020)

Some significant recent cases:

- McLean v Thornhill [2022] EWHC 457 (Ch), [2022] S.T.C. 1110 and [2019] EWHC 3514 (Ch). Leading Counsel for Andrew Thornhill KC, a prominent tax silk sued by investors in a series of failed film finance schemes. Zacaroli J upheld the defence at every level: no duty, no breach, and no reliance (with some limitation defences upheld for good measure).
- Lancaster v Peacock [2022] EWHC 2662 (Ch) and [2020] EWHC 1231 (Ch). Leading Counsel for Jonathan Peacock KC, another prominent tax silk sued by investors in a failed tax scheme. The Claimants abandoned the claims close to trial and paid costs.
- Accident Exchange v McLean & Others [2018] EWHC (Comm) 23 and [2018] EWHC 1533 (Comm). Leading Counsel for Morgan Cole, solicitors accused (with two other firms) of conspiring with a dishonest expert witness to pervert the course of justice in thousands of "credit hire" cases.

Some significant past cases:

- Stone & Rolls v Moore Stephens – Tom acted for the defendant auditors at all levels, including the House of Lords. In this landmark case, which sharply divided judicial and academic opinion, the auditors faced a claim for negligent failure to detect that their corporate client was being used as a vehicle for fraud by its owner and controller. They succeeded in having the claim struck out on the basis that the company itself had been guilty of the dishonest conduct which it was said the auditors should have detected, and thus could not mount a claim.
- "Phone hacking": Tom was heavily involved in rebutting the allegation by Rupert Murdoch that solicitors who had formerly acted for News International (Harbottle & Lewis) had made a "serious mistake" in relation to the phone hacking scandal; this encompassed dealing not only with News International itself but also with Parliament and the Leveson Enquiry.
- Reed Employment v Robson Rhodes - Reed (the temporary employment business) entered into tax planning on the advice of its then accountants, Robson Rhodes; ultimately this was challenged by HMRC and litigation followed. Tom acted for Reed in a claim against Robson Rhodes for negligence both as tax advisers and auditors.
- MCashback v Nabarro LLP - Tom defended Nabarro LLP against a heavy negligence claim (put at about £125m) relating to the conduct of underlying litigation between 2006 and 2009.
- SocGen v RSA and others: after the loss of $500m in gold bullion, Societe Generale claimed against both its insurers and its insurance brokers (one of whom Tom defended).
- Credit Suisse v Linklaters : this claim arose from the collapse of Parmalat. Tom acted for Credit Suisse in its complaint that it had been badly advised on Italian law by Linklaters.
- The Football League v edge ellison: following the collapse of ITV Digital, the League sued its

solicitors for failing to advise that a parent company guarantee should have been obtained on the original sale of broadcasting rights. This has become a leading case on the line between legal and commercial advice from solicitors.

Professional discipline

- "A robust advocate, who adapts his style expertly to the case in hand." (The Legal 500 2017)

As a natural fit with his expertise in professional negligence, Tom regularly acts in relation to professional disciplinary matters. He has extensive experience of the disciplinary functions of all the major regulators, including the Takeover Panel, the FRC, the ICAEW, and the SRA. He acted for **PricewaterhouseCoopers** in relation to charges brought by the FRC over its audit of Connaught plc, and for **Freshfields** in relation to charges brought by the Takeover Panel in relation to the affairs of Vallar plc/BUMI. He is currently lead Counsel for the FRC in relation to its investigations into the auditing of **Carillion plc** by **KPMG**.

Insurance/reinsurance

- "Tom is really hard-working and super clever." (Chambers & Partners 2023)
- "Very, very good at advocacy … bright, intelligent, responsive and easy to work with." (Chambers & Partners 2018)
- "A wonderful team player and an outstanding performer." (The Legal 500 2017)
- "His cross-examination is sublime and a joy to behold. Also, despite being diabolically bright, he is a good person to work with and helps get things done." (Chambers & Partners 2017)
- "He's a really properly excellent insurance litigator." (Chambers & Partners 2014)

Tom's practice has included a substantial amount of insurance and reinsurance work from the moment he joined chambers. Most of this has been undertaken in arbitrations, especially in the reinsurance market, and is therefore confidential but in the last decade the value of the large number of insurance/reinsurance arbitrations in which Tom has appeared is in the billions. Tom is also instructed from time to time as an expert in English law on insurance/reinsurance cases in other jurisdictions and as an arbitrator in insurance/reinsurance disputes.

Banking/corporate finance

Tom is regularly instructed in matters involving banks and other financial institutions. Two

examples:

- Following the nationalisation of Bradford & Bingley in 2008, claims were threatened by shareholders who had bought shares in a rights issue only weeks before the collapse. Tom acted for both the bank (in effect the Government) and its board of directors in successfully rebutting these claims. This involved analysing the underlying reasons for the bank's failure (its involvement in the sub-prime mortgage market) and advising on some unexplored areas of financial services law.
- The insolvency and restructuring of British Energy led to a complex suite of banking documents in relation to one particular asset, a power station in the UK. Tom has acted for British Energy (and then EdF) in a series of successful disputes, at first instance and on appeal, over the construction of the various interlocking banking agreements.

In addition, Tom's professional negligence practice for (and occasionally against) the "Magic Circle" solicitors regularly crosses over into high value banking transactions (for example he advised a major City firm in relation to claims arising from the collapse of Lehman and the form of a Prime Brokerage Agreement under which assets of almost US$1bn were being held).

Privilege

Tom is regularly instructed by The Law Society in relation to questions relating to privilege. He appeared in the House of Lords when the Society intervened in **Three Rivers DC v Bank of England (No 6)** on the scope of legal advice privilege, and in both the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court in **Prudential v Pandolfo** on whether advice on the law from accountants attracts legal advice privilege.

Directory Quotes

Below is a selection of comments about Tom since he took silk in 2008.

- "Tom is excellent, hardworking and the most user-friendly KC I have ever worked with. He is no-nonsense, direct, inventive and creative - he will think outside the box to find ways to protect his client's interests." (Chambers & Partners 2027)
- "Tom is a master of detail, who is extremely learned and gives real thought to his cases. Terrific to work with and a real team player, he is fantastic in court and always respected by judges." (Chambers & Partners 2027)
- "He is excellent; hard-working and the most user-friendly KC I have ever worked with. He is excellent on his feet, and every time I see him in court he builds excellent rapport with judges." (Chambers & Partners 2027)

- "Tom is fantastic. He is the master of detail; terrific to work with and a real team player. He is fantastic in court; meticulous, and judges listen to and respect him." (Chambers & Partners 2027)
- "Tom is a very good advocate with a good turn of phrase, which is well judged. He has an air of gravity when needed but also humour to disarm in difficult moments; a class act." (Chambers & Partners 2027)
- "Clients love him. He is no-nonsense and direct, but also inventive and creative. He will think outside the box to find ways to protect client interests." (Chambers & Partners 2027)
- "He is one of the leading professional negligence barristers I have worked with. He has a tremendously powerful presence in court, is a staunch advocate for the client, brings a profound and enduring understanding of professional negligence law and practice, and has expertise in tax-related matters." (Chambers & Partners 2027)
- "Tom is one of the most active silks in the sphere, particularly on the financial side. He has broad expertise." (Chambers & Partners 2027)
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- "Tom is a truly outstanding advocate. He is funny, insightful and unbelievably hard-working. A serious player whom I would trust with serious work." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- "Tom Adam KC delivers analysis that is second to none and puts forward his analysis in a

straightforward and comprehensible manner." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

- "Tom is a very good commercial practitioner across the board." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- "Tom Adam KC has a very effective advocacy style. He appears very affable but has a knife under his cloak." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- "Tom Adam KC typically advises on professional negligence matters relating to solicitors or barristers, insurance brokers and accountancy firms. He is known for the breadth of his commercial practice and wins praise for his ability to handle highly complicated cases." (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- "Tom is one of the best there is in the commercial litigation market. He has clear views, offers excellent legal and strategic guidance." (Legal 500 2026)
- "He is outstanding. I continue to think that he is the person I would least want to be against." (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- "Tom is absolutely outstanding. He is a really smart litigator and a very smart strategist." (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- "Tom is excellent. He gives extremely clear and robust advice under pressured circumstances. I would have no hesitation to instruct him on the most important matters for our clients." (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- "Tom is an exceptional and determined advocate. He is notable for his ability to stand by his view and conviction in a case." (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- "Tom is a great leader and an outstanding advocate." (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- "Tom is an incredibly powerful advocate, who is very hard-working. He is absolutely top-drawer." (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- "Tom Adam is very good, aggressive when he needs to be and someone who leaves no stone unturned. He thinks through absolutely everything." (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- 'Tom is an engaging advocate.' (Legal 500 2025)
- 'He is truly excellent. He has a great presence in court, which is founded on a thorough knowledge of the papers.' (Legal 500 2025)
- "Tom Adam is a very clever and effective advocate." (Chambers & Partners 2024)
- "A really fantastic advocate especially for matters going to the higher courts." (Chambers & Partners 2024)
- "Tom Adam is a very effective advocate." (Chambers & Partners 2024)
- "Tom knows the case inside out. He thinks through every angle and is a great judge of the bench." (Chambers & Partners 2024)
- "Tom is fabulous. He is on top of every detail and a real performer in court." (Chambers & Partners 2023)

- "He's a joy to work with: he's phenomenally clever, very robust, and always takes a view on the merits of the case." (Chambers & Partners 2023)
- Tom is really hard-working and super clever." (Chambers & Partners 2023)
- ''Tom is a brilliant lawyer and sees the issues in the case with great clarity. This is invaluable in setting strategy. He is a delight to work with and never fails to let you know precisely what he is thinking. A real star of his generation.'' (Legal 500 2023)
- ''He is one of the most impressive advocates at the top of his game.'' (Legal 500 2023)
- "He prepares superbly, his advocacy is really impressive, and he considers every possible argument in a case. Tom is a real wordsmith, who comes up with just the right way of explaining points to the judge." (Chambers & Partners 2022)
- "One of the professional negligence heavy-hitters, he is absolutely brilliant in terms of technical ability and advocacy. If Tom is in the case you definitely want him on your side." "Tom is a first-rate advocate and he's prepared to stand his ground with a tricky court. Easy and helpful to work with; I would recommend him for difficult matters." (Chambers & Partners 2022)
- "Perennially brilliant – solicitors cannot express in words just how good he is." (Legal 500 2022)
- "Really fights your corner – he's a pugnacious barrister, who allies that with a serious intellect." "He is very effective, intelligent and really knows his field." (Chambers & Partners 2021)
- "Lives and breathes his cases, phenomenal advocate and does not spread himself thinly like others at his level." (Legal 500 2021)
- "Tom is one of the cleverest and most forceful silks I know. He is a delight to work with. He has very considerable experience in relation to the largest professional liability disputes. He never sits on the fence in terms of his advice which is always clear and well considered." (Legal 500 2021)
- Tom Adam KC is a “standout name” in the market, lauded for his adept knowledge of insurance and reinsurance arbitration. (Who's Who Legal - UK Bar: Insurance & Reinsurance 2020)
- "He is very good fun to work with: he brings a real energy and sense of fun to the team and is very good at reading the court and fighting his corner." "He is a very robust, sound, clever silk." (Chambers & Partners 2020)
- "He can turn his hand to anything, and he has a great courtroom style." (Chambers & Partners UK & Global 2020)
- "A very strong team player and team leader." (The Legal 500 2020)
- "Tom Adam KC gets under the skin of a case and advocates superbly, showing great judgement as to which points to take and which to leave." (Chambers & Partners UK & Global

2019)

- "He's incredibly good in court - very articulate. His technical advice is also very good, and he's very responsive." (Chambers & Partners 2019)
- "A depth of experience in the insurance market." (The Legal 500 2018-19)
- "A superb analyst and excellent to work with." "He has got a really excellent style in court and is very good with clients. He gives robust, clear advice." (Chambers & Partners 2018)
- "A wonderful team player and an outstanding performer." (The Legal 500 2017)
- "He continues to impress on large complex litigation, and he's the first choice for challenges to existing law." "He has a great ability to break down complex issues." (Chambers & Partners 2017)
- "His cross-examination is sublime and a joy to behold. Also, despite being diabolically bright, he is a good person to work with and helps get things done." (Chambers & Partners 2017)
- “Highly regarded by instructing parties and peers alike, with one source naming him as "undoubtedly one of the most brilliant legal minds of his generation."” (Chambers & Partners 2015)
- "Commercial, user-friendly and a delight to work with. He has terrific judgement and is an accomplished advocate." "Clearly had a grasp of the detail that was second to none. A very good advocate who was very good on cross-examination; he knew where he was going tactically." (Chambers & Partners 2015)
- "A superb analyst and excellent to work with." "He is bright, hard-working, lateral thinking, and he has a good sense of what argument will work with a particular judge." (Chambers & Partners 2015)
- “A compelling advocate, who is persuasive and agile in oral argument.” (The Legal 500 2014)
- "He's a really properly excellent insurance litigator. He's dead good." (Chambers & Partners 2014)
- "He gets very directly and quickly to the key issues, does everything with panache and a great sense of humour." "A clever and punchy barrister, he doesn't shy away from detail, and is extremely clear in his thinking." (Chambers & Partners 2014)
- "Ferociously bright." "He always knows the documents in a case inside out." (Chambers & Partners 2014)
- "Another favourite of solicitors for complex cases of some magnitude is the "exceptional" Tom Adam KC, who has a breadth of knowledge that enables him to take on an impressive range of substantial claims." (Chambers & Partners 2013)
- "...a strong trial advocate with a powerful command of the facts in a case." (Chambers & Partners 2013)

- "Unbelievably bright" (Chambers & Partners 2012)
- His clients love him since he is ‘enormously incisive and hugely clever', and also appreciate that he has a ‘great sense of humour'." (Chambers & Partners 2012)
- "Not only is Tom Adam KC ‘very entertaining and easy to work with', he also ‘quickly gets to grips with complex issues so you can be assured he will think right around a problem'." (Chambers & Partners 2012)
- "'Without a doubt the most capable brain of his generation." (Legal 500 2011)
- "Tom Adam KC has ‘a razor-sharp mind'." (Legal 500 2011)
- "Hugely talented individual and a complete joy to work with" (Chambers & Partners 2011)
- "Always able to think his way around a problem, he is an asset to any team." (Chambers & Partners 2010)
- "Tom Adam KC is praised for his ‘steely drive', and is also noted for possessing ‘bountiful charisma'." (Chambers & Partners 2010)
- "Superb knowledge of insurance law" "excellent relationships with solicitors." (Chambers & Partners, 2009)
- "A tenacious advocate, equally at home in court or before an arbitration tribunal. Observers are impressed by the ‘conviction and emphasis with which he delivers his points'." (Chambers & Partners 2008)
- " ‘Bright, industrious and witty,' he ‘really adds value.' " (Chambers & Partners 2008)
- "One of ‘the first choices for a case involving auditors in a big financial institution', Tom Adam is ‘a barrister it is hard to find fault with.' Extremely confident and a quality advocate." (Chambers & Partners 2008)

Education & Qualifications

Trinity College, Cambridge; BA 1987 (Lizette Bentwich Prize).

Boxing blue 1987.

Charles Grant Tennant Prize for light verse 1984 and 1987.

Hooper Oration Prize 1986.

Married; three sons.