



James Sharpe



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"Hard working, pragmatic, approachable, clever, meticulous, insightful."
(Legal 500, 2024)



James' practice spans a broad range of commercial disputes with particular focus on insurance and reinsurance, professional liability and commercial chancery work. A confident advocate and a team player, James is equally happy acting as sole counsel as he is as part of a larger legal team.

James is named a "*Leading Junior*" in Chambers & Partners and Legal 500 in Professional Negligence, Insurance and Reinsurance and Property Damage. James is recognised for being user friendly and accessible being described as "*just so easy to work*", "*very approachable*", "*very collaborative and very commercial*" and having "*a calming touch in stressful situations*"; his advocacy skills including "*great on his feet, calm and clear*" and a "*mature cross-examiner*". He is also recognised for his intellect and analytical ability being described as "*clever, meticulous, insightful*", having "*an incredible intelligence*" and his drafting skills as "*technically excellent and very persuasive*".

Before coming to the Bar, James read Jurisprudence at Somerville College, University of Oxford and was then a research assistant in the Commercial and Common Law Team at the Law Commission during which time he was involved in the passage of the Third Parties (Rights against Insurers) Act 2010 and then the Consumer Insurance (Disclosure and Representations) Act 2012. As a result of this experience he has particular knowledge of insurance law and the insurance industry. During this time, he also taught contract and tort law at Queen Mary, University of London and Westminster University.

Commercial

James is regularly instructed in commercial matters involving sale of goods, supply of goods and services, bailment and agency; as well as claims arising out of SPAs, joint venture agreements, commission agreements, franchise agreements and agency agreements. James also often acts in respect of agreements between insurers and/or insurance brokers. James also has experience of obtaining injunctions (interim and freezing) at short notice.

Selected Cases

- MW High Tech Projects Limited v Greenhalgh & Ors: (with Alison Padfield KC) acting on behalf of three former directors against a £320m claim for breach of directors' duties arising out of the Claimant's entry into three large waste to energy projects. This is set down for a 5 week trial in November 2025 ([2022] EWHC 2000 (TCC)) (instructed by Beale & Co).
- Re a fintech company (Isle of Man) – James (with Isabel Hitching KC) is acting for the respondents to an alleged minority prejudice claim pursuant to s.180 of the Isle of Man Companies Act 2006 (ongoing), in June 2023, the First Deemster granted James a temporary advocate's licence to appear in this matter.
- University of the Arts London v Legal & General – James (with Daniel Shapiro KC) acted for UAL in relation to the rectification of VAT provisions in a commercial lease ([2023] EWHC 994 (Ch)) (instructed by Simmons & Simmons).
- Corum XL v Epwin Logistics – James (with Daniel Shapiro KC) acted for a development financier in respect of the rectification of a commercial lease (instructed by Simmons & Simmons).
- Valero Energy Limited v B&A Contracts Limited: (with Colin Edelman KC and Daniel Shapiro KC) defended a tank cleaning contractor against a claim for a contractual indemnity following an explosion at a refinery in Pembrokeshire in 2011. The case settled shortly before trial in 2021 (instructed by Kennedys LLP) (TCC).
- Propharma Group MIS Holdings Ltd v Certain underwriting members of Lloyd Syndicates: (with Ben Quiney KC) acting on behalf of the London Market in defence of a claim that a Buyer-Side Warranty and Indemnity Insurance Policy has been triggered following the purchase of a company pursuant to a SPA (Commercial Court)(instructed by DAC Beachcroft LLP).
- Harwood Capital v Lonsdale Insurance Brokers: sole counsel for the brokers in a claim that may rise up to £10m. The claim centres on an allegation that the brokers failed to procure sufficient cover so as to indemnify Harwood in respect of a claim being brought in the United State for assisting breach of breach of fiduciary duty and interference with contract. (Commercial Court)(instructed by CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP).
- Confidential arbitration: (with Daniel Shapiro KC) acting on behalf of a bank in relation to a €80million claim made against it for its role as depositary of a fund.
- Belmont Farms v Duynie – (with David Elvin KC) in the Commercial Court acting for a supplier in a £10 million claim arising out of the sale of contaminated animal feed (instructed by CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP).
- Chalfin -v- PIB – (with Ben Quiney KC) acting on behalf of insurance brokers in a Commercial Court claim.
- Brit UW Ltd v F & B Trenchless Ltd [2016] Lloyd's Rep IR 69; [2015] EWHC 2237 – Comm acted for the insured tunnelling contractor where insurers were seeking to avoid their public liability insurance (with Daniel Shapiro KC).
- Global Draw v IGT (2015) – In the Commercial Court acting for a vendor of a video gaming company in respect of various claims arising out of a share purchase agreement. The claim was valued at over £50 million and settled after one week of trial on confidential terms. Between January and May, James worked almost exclusively on this matter assisting with disclosure, witness statements and preparing applications for specific disclosure (with Christopher Butcher KC and Daniel Shapiro KC).
- British Amateur Gymnastics Association v (1) Zurich (2) Brit (3) Perkins Slade Limited (with Ben Quiney KC). Acting for Third Defendant in Commercial Court claim concerning a dispute between an insured, two insurers and brokers. The case raises points regarding insurance brokers' duty of care in negligence and contract as well as in relation to the doctrines of waiver, estoppel and rectification



(instructed by Mills & Reeve).

Insurance & Reinsurance

He advises upon and litigates all insurance related disputes, including: D&O, PI, PL & EL, product liability, and Warranty and Indemnity policy disputes; dealing with insolvent insured's and insurance companies; subrogated recovery claims; and all coverage disputes (including non-disclosure and misrepresentation, notification, moral hazard and warranty cases).

James also acts for and against insurance brokers and other insurance intermediaries in professional negligence claims.

In the latest edition of Chambers UK Bar, James is recommended as a Leading junior: *"James is great for all deals, but he is extremely good on coverage matters."*

Equally, in the current edition of Legal 500, James is recommended as a Leading junior: *"James is very capable. He has very good judgement and a very calming manner with both clients and the court. He is firm with our opponents but always strikes the right balance. He has very good legal knowledge and is good combination of technical and practical skills."*

Selected Cases

- Confidential arbitration: (with Ben Quiney KC) instructed in a very high value Arbitration brought by various resorts in the Caribbean as a result of the Covid-19 at each of the various islands and the diverse government responses (instructed by Herbert Smith Freehills LLP).
 - Carebrook Limited and (2) Carebrook (Camden Market) Limited v QIC Europe Limited: (with Ben Quiney KC) acting on behalf of insurers in respect of a claim for losses incurred during the Covid-19 pandemic and which considers the correct limit of indemnity under a business interruption policy (instructed by DWF LLP).
 - CG Restaurants v QIC Europe Limited: (with Daniel Shapiro KC) acting on behalf of insurers against a claim under a business interruption policy claiming for multiple indemnity periods and losses incurred during the Covid-19 pandemic ([2023] EWHC 245 (Comm)) (instructed by DWF LLP).
 - Propharma Group MIS Holdings Ltd v Certain underwriting members of Lloyd Syndicates: (with Ben Quiney KC) acting on behalf of the London Market in defence of a claim that a Buyer-Side Warranty and Indemnity Insurance Policy has been triggered following the purchase of a company pursuant to a SPA (Commercial Court)(instructed by DAC Beachcroft LLP).
 - Harwood Capital v Lonsdale Insurance Brokers: sole counsel for the brokers in a claim that may rise up to £10m. The claim centres on an allegation that the brokers failed to procure sufficient cover so as to indemnify Harwood in respect of a claim being brought in the United State for assisting breach of breach of fiduciary duty and interference with contract. (Commercial Court)(instructed by CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP).
 - Chalfin -v- PIB Risk Services: (with Ben Quiney KC) defending a firm of insurance brokers in a Commercial Court claim.
 - Confidential arbitration: (with Ben Quiney KC) acting on behalf of insurers in an aggregation dispute regarding solicitors' minimum terms arising from various conveyancing transactions.
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- Confidential arbitration: (with Ben Quiney KC) acting on behalf of directors and officers in a dispute regarding the construction of a D&O policy.
- Confidential arbitration: un-led against leading counsel and acting on behalf of the London market in a breach of Coverholder dispute.
- Sole counsel acting for the London Market in a breach of coverholder dispute alleging that its former coverholder breached its binding authority and continued to write risks after non-renewal.
- *Brit UW Ltd v F&B Trenchless Ltd* [2016] Lloyd's Rep IR 69; [2015] EWHC 2237 (Comm) – Acted for the insured tunneling contractor where insurers were seeking to avoid their public liability insurance (with Daniel Shapiro KC).
- *British Amateur Gymnastics Association v (1) Zurich (2) Brit (3) Perkins Slade Limited* (with Ben Quiney KC) acted for brokers in this long running multi-million pound coverage dispute arising from cover issued to the British Gymnastics Association. Issues arose relating to cover, non-disclosure, claims made policies, the practice in the Lloyds Market, brokers' duties, and causation. In addition there was a particular dispute as to the placing and management of excess cover, which it was successfully argued could not be added as new allegations to the claim close to trial; *British Gymnastics v Zurich, Brit & Perkins Slade* [2017] EWHC 2500 (Comm) (Mills & Reeve).
- (with Ben Quiney KC) Instructed on behalf of a firm of insurance brokers to defend a £4m claim alleging that it had failed to properly assess the client's insurance needs resulting in significant underinsurance following a catastrophic flood (instructed by Carter Perry Bailey).

Professional Liability

James regularly acts for and against a variety of professionals including solicitors (including matrimonial finance and pension sharing order disputes), accountants, mortgage brokers, insurance brokers, IFAs and pension providers and administrators.

In the latest editions of Chambers UK Bar and Legal 500, James is recommended as a Leading junior:

- Chambers & Partners (2025): *"James has a reassuring combination of technical rigour and commercial appreciation."*
- Legal 500 (2025): *"He is well prepared, client friendly, and gives sound advice."*

Solicitors

James acts in claims arising out of the full range of legal work including arising out of litigation and the settlement of litigation, commercial transactions, SPAs, private equity, tax advice, commercial property, conveyancing, Friday afternoon frauds, ancillary relief and crime.

- *Hall v Saunders Law Ltd* [2020] EWHC 404 – (with Daniel Shapiro KC) acted for Saunders Law in a successful summary judgment application on a claim brought by a litigation funder.
- *Perry v Raleys Solicitors* (with Ben Quiney KC) acting as part of the team defending the series of claims arising from the alleged under-settlement of miner's VWF claims by, amongst others, Raleys solicitors. *Perry* is a key Supreme Court decision reviewing important issues for solicitors' negligence. It deals with the test for lost chances and honesty, the principles in *Allied Maples*, and questions of the Court of Appeal's jurisdiction (BLM).
- *Hinkel v Simmons & Simmons*: James successfully struck out a claim alleging fraudulent misrepresentation against a counterparty's solicitors arising out a failed property transaction ([2021])

EWHC 3416 (Ch); [2021] EWHC 55 (Ch)) (instructed by CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP).

- Business Finance Litigation: James acted on behalf of Simmons & Simmons, Leading and junior counsel in the longstanding litigation in the Financial List ([2022] EWHC 140 (Ch)) (instructed by CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP)

Insurance brokers

- Chalfin -v- PIB Risk Services: (with Ben Quiney KC) defending a firm of insurance brokers in a Commercial Court claim.
- Harwood Capital v Lonsdale Insurance Brokers: acting as sole counsel for the brokers in a claim that may rise up to £10m. The claim centres on an allegation that the brokers failed to procure sufficient cover so as to indemnify Harwood in respect of a claim being brought in the United State for assisting breach of breach of fiduciary duty and interference with contract. (Commercial Court)(instructed by CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP).
- (with Ben Quiney KC) Instructed on behalf of a firm of insurance brokers to defend a £4m claim alleging that it had failed to properly assess the client's insurance needs resulting in significant underinsurance following a catastrophic flood (instructed by Carter Perry Bailey).
- British Amateur Gymnastics Association v (1) Zurich (2) Brit (3) Perkins Slade Limited (with Ben Quiney KC) acted for brokers in this long running multi-million pound coverage dispute arising from cover issued to the British Gymnastics Association. Issues arose relating to cover, non-disclosure, claims made policies, the practice in the Lloyds Market, brokers' duties, and causation. In addition there was a particular dispute as to the placing and management of excess cover, which it was successfully argued could not be added as new allegations to the claim close to trial; *British Gymnastics v Zurich, Brit & Perkins Slade* [2017] EWHC 2500 (Comm) (Mills & Reeve).

Finance professionals

- Confidential arbitration: (with Daniel Shapiro KC) acting on behalf of a bank in relation to a €90million claim made against it for its role as depositary of a fund.
- T George v Shoosmiths v Chase de Vere: James is acting as sole counsel for a firm of IFAs in respect of a contribution claim being brought by a solicitor who had power of attorney of a HNV individual's financial affairs. The main claim alleges that an investment of c. £9m should have been made on a joint names' basis saving a tax liability and loss of investment gains. The claim is pleaded in the region of £4m (instructed by CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP).
- Jago v Mortgage4you: (with Daniel Shapiro KC) acting on behalf of mortgage broker in respect of a claim that the mortgage adviser negligently advised an interest only mortgage. James is instructed on behalf of a number of mortgage brokers in a raft of cases that are being brought with respect to mortgage advice given in the mid 2000s (instructed by RPC).
- Successfully defended a trustee in bankruptcy against a professional negligence claim brought by the bankrupt (instructed by Browne Jacobson).

Accountants

- Amathus Drinks PLC & Ors v EAGK LLP & Anor [2023] EWHC 2312 (Ch): instructed on behalf of accountancy firm for alleged failure to detect a fraud. The case raises difficult issues as to the duty owed by an accountancy firm to a buyer and the effect of a Bannerman clause (instructed by RPC LLP).



- Tower Boots London Limited v Haysmacintyre LLP: instructed on behalf of accountancy firm for alleged failure to advise correctly on VAT (instructed by CMS LLP).

Other professionals

- James often acts for other professionals or quasi-professionals: for example fire service (Wembridge Claimants & Ors v East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service [2013] EWHC 2331 (QB)) and Fire safety engineers: *Howmet v EDL & ECS* 157 Con. L.R. 1 & [2016] B.L.R. 555

Property Damage

James has extensive experience in property damage disputes arising out of explosions, fires and floods. He deals with coverage, recoveries and defences. His experience includes being led in large property damage disputes in the TCC as well as acting unled.

In the latest edition of Chambers UK Bar, James is recommended as a Leading junior: *"James is a fantastic counsel. He is good at providing advice and drafting, and his advocacy is good."*

Selected Cases

- Valero Energy Limited v B&A Contracts Limited: (with Colin Edelman KC and Daniel Shapiro KC) defended a tank cleaning contractor against a claim for a contractual indemnity following an explosion at a refinery in Pembrokeshire in 2011. The case settled shortly before trial in 2021 (instructed by Kennedys LLP) (TCC).
- Murphy v Barnsley MBC: successfully defended a flooding claim following a 4 day trial in September 2018 (instructed by Kennedys).
- Acting in a multi-million pound subrogated claim arising out of a large fire (with Andrew Rigney KC).
- Successfully defended a tree root claim in a three day trial in the Central London TCC List (instructed by Clyde & Co).
- Howmet v EDL [2016] B.L.R. 555 ; [2016] EWCA Civ 847 (with Ben Quiney KC) – In the Court of Appeal acting for a factory owner in a recovery action resulting from a serious fire that caused £24m losses arising from an alleged failure of failsafe devices (instructed by RPC). James also appeared at first instance in a 3-week trial in the TCC (157 Con. L.R. 1; [2014] EWHC 3933 (TCC)).

Product Liability

James' product liability practice overlaps with his commercial, insurance and property damage practice, with those cases often involving an element of product liability, for example:

- Valero Energy Limited v B&A Contracts Limited: (with Colin Edelman KC and Daniel Shapiro KC) defending a tank cleaning contractor against a claim for a contractual indemnity following an explosion at a refinery in Pembrokeshire in 2011. The trial is listed for 3 weeks in October 2021 (instructed by Kennedys LLP)(TCC).
- Howmet v EDL [2016] B.L.R. 555 ; [2016] EWCA Civ 847 (with Ben Quiney KC) – In the Court of Appeal acting for a factory owner in a recovery action resulting from a serious fire that caused £24m losses



arising from an alleged failure of failsafe devices (instructed by RPC). James also appeared at first instance in a 3-week trial in the TCC (157 Con. L.R. 1; [2014] EWHC 3933 (TCC)).

Qualifications

- Walter Wigglesworth Scholarship, Lincoln's Inn (2011)
- European Commission Scholarship (unable to accept), Lincoln's Inn (2009)
- Blackstone's Mooting Competition (finalist) (2009)
- BVC, City Law School (2008 – 2009)
- Hardwicke Scholarship, Lincoln's Inn (2007)
- BA (Hons) Jurisprudence, Somerville College, University of Oxford (2004 – 2007)

Memberships

- COMBAR
- LCLCBA
- PNBA
- TECBAR

Recommendations

"James is a fantastic counsel." He "has a reassuring combination of technical rigour and commercial appreciation."..."He is very user-friendly and is a good, sensible sounding board."
Chambers & Partners, 2025

"James is very capable. He has very good judgement and a very calming manner with both clients and the court. He is firm with our opponents but always strikes the right balance. He has very good legal knowledge and is good combination of technical and practical skills."..."He is well prepared, client friendly, and gives sound advice."
Legal 500, 2025

"James shows incredible energy, commitment and intellect."..."James is just so easy to work with and so knowledgeable. He has a calming touch in stressful situations."
Chambers & Partners, 2024

"Easy to deal with both for solicitors and for clients. User-friendly and good legal analysis."
Legal 500, 2024

"Hard working, pragmatic, approachable, clever, meticulous, insightful."
Legal 500, 2024

'James is great on his feet, calm and clear. He is also really excellent in conference. I always feel that I can chat anything and everything through with James, even on very difficult cases, or cases where there is no clear way through. Very collaborative and very commercial.'
Legal 500, 2023



'James is a good lawyer and very approachable, particularly with clients, and very good at marshalling the litigation.'

Legal 500, 2023

"James is highly sought after." "He is an excellent barrister."

Chambers & Partners, 2023

"He is a really nice individual to deal with. He is user-friendly and I trust his advice."

Chambers & Partners, 2023

"James has got incredible technical knowledge and is a very good and mature cross-examiner."

Chambers & Partners, 2022

"James is a very effective operator – he has good communication skills and knows the law."

Legal 500, 2022

"James is extremely easy to work with and reliable – gets down to the core of the case and avoids distractions."

Legal 500, 2022

"He has all of the relevant precedents at the forefront of his mind. Presents well to professional and insurer clients and is a reassuring sounding board on complex issues."..."Does a good and detailed job, with sound judgement and common sense. A true all-rounder, who is bright, personable and commercial – a great asset to any team!"

Legal 500, 2021