



William Lacey



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William Lacey became a member of Chambers in 2023 on successful completion of his pupillage. He accepts instructions across Chambers' core areas of practice, with an emphasis on insurance & reinsurance, professional liability, commercial disputes, construction & engineering, property damage, insurance fraud, credit hire, personal injury and inquests.

About William Lacey's practice:

- William's busy civil and commercial practice is evenly weighted between court and written work.
- He is usually instructed as sole counsel, but is occasionally led.
- He appears in interim, procedural and approval hearings in the High Court.
- His County Court practice consists mainly of trials and interim hearings on the fast and intermediate tracks, and multi-track CCMCs. He occasionally appears in the First-tier Tribunal.
- He appears in the Coroners' Courts on behalf of families and other interested persons.
- He regularly drafts pleadings and pre-action correspondence, and advises insurers, solicitors and other clients in writing.
- He accepts appropriate direct access instructions, mainly in commercial, construction and coronial matters.

About William Lacey's education and background:

- William read music at King's College, Cambridge, taking a First Class degree and being elected Scholar of his college.
- He obtained a Distinction on the GDL and an Outstanding on the Bar Course.
- He was awarded Lord Brougham and Lord Denning Scholarships by Lincoln's Inn, and a Senior Advocacy Scholarship by the University of Law.
- Prior to coming to the Bar, William spent 25 years as an international orchestral conductor.
- He worked with orchestras from Tromsø to Tel Aviv and from Honolulu to Hong Kong.
- He conducted almost 60 operas in cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Fe, Houston, New York, Barcelona, Paris, Leipzig, Stockholm and Moscow.
- He studied the piano with Alfred Brendel, and still plays to concert level.
- William speaks German to a high standard, having spent ten years living and working in Germany and Austria. He also speaks conversational Italian and French.

Insurance & Reinsurance

William regularly advises insurer clients on coverage, defence and recovery, and settles pleadings on their behalf. Shortly after completing pupillage, he spent six months on part-time secondment at a leading insurance/re-insurance law firm in the City of London, where he gained in-depth experience of a wide range of commercial, property damage and construction disputes worth up to £20 million. He can also advise on coverage in EL/PL, RTA and product liability claims.

Current and recent work for leading global insurers includes:

- Advising on an eight-figure coverage dispute arising from the supply of allegedly defective components to a major infrastructure project.
- Successfully representing the defendant at the trial of a coverage dispute concerning damage to a luxury car alleged to have been caused by vandalism.
- Advising on a complex and long-running subsidence claim, which raises some novel points of law.
- Advising on a six-figure coverage dispute concerning a product liability policy.
- Advising on both coverage and recovery in a series of claims arising from structural defects warranties for new dwellings.
- Representing an insurer which is attempting to recover its outlay arising from a school skiing trip which was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Drafting documents, and attending conferences and mediation, in relation to two substantial Covid-related business interruption insurance claims (as a pupil).

William is a member of the British Insurance Law Association.

Professional Liability

William is developing a busy and varied professional liability practice. He regularly advises litigants, drafts pre-action correspondence and pleadings on their behalf, and represents them in court. His clients include solicitors, law firms, architects, engineers, financial advisers, property management companies, accountants, and auditors. During pupillage he gained experience of D&O claims.

Current and recent work includes:

Solicitors and law firms

- Advising, and drafting Particulars of Claim, in a High Court claim for nearly a million pounds arising from the alleged unsettlement of a claim relating to a major industrial accident. The claim is being brought against a well-known firm of claimant personal injury solicitors.
- Advising a firm of conveyancing solicitors accused of negligent delays which caused a client's mortgage offer to lapse, causing financial loss.
- Drafting a defence for a firm of solicitors accused of having failed to protect their client's position in a commercial lease renegotiation by making an application to court, with the alleged result that their client lost the opportunity to renew the lease.
- Advising a family law solicitor accused by a third party of negligently drafting a court order, which was then approved by a judge. The third party alleged that, as a direct consequence, he was arrested

and became homeless.

- Advising a solicitors' firm accused by a deceased person's estate of having negligently failed to renew the insurance on the deceased person's house, in circumstances where it knew (or ought to have known) that the house had a long history of subsidence.
- Advising a solicitor accused of having made errors during the negotiation of a commercial lease which caused six-figure consequential losses to their client.
- Advising a solicitor alleged to have given incorrect advice on the law of Stamp Duty Land Tax and its effect on a substantial commercial property transaction.
- Advising a solicitor accused of having negligently helped a client to alter their will, in circumstances where the solicitor allegedly ought to have suspected that the client lacked testamentary capacity.
- Advising an employment solicitor accused of having negligently missed a filing deadline, with the alleged result that the solicitor's client lost the chance of bringing an employment tribunal claim.
- Advising a firm of personal injury solicitors accused of having negligently agreed to a full and final settlement of a client's claim, in circumstances where they knew or ought to have known that a sizeable claim for credit hire losses was still outstanding.

Others

- Advising and representing a property management company accused of having negligently failed to comply with the law concerning tenancy deposit protection. The claim has not yet been listed for trial, but William recently secured a substantial costs order in favour of his client at an interim hearing.
- Advising and representing a firm of accountants alleged to have given incorrect advice to a company director in relation to a Director's Loan Account.
- Advising and representing an accountant accused of having negligently failed to verify figures underlying a financial presentation to potential investors, with the alleged result that the potential deal collapsed.
- Drafting a Defence for a company that produces 3D Building Information Modelling of architectural designs, and has been accused of negligence and breach of contract by a former client.
- Advising a construction company on its counterclaim in negligence against an architect who was suing it for unpaid fees.

William is a member of the Professional Negligence Bar Association.

Commercial

William has acted in disputes concerning agency, bankruptcy, civil fraud, commercial leases, company law, directors' duties, financial regulation, insolvency, and sale of goods, as well as general contractual matters. He is able to accept appropriate commercial instructions on a direct access basis.

Current and recent work includes:

- Successfully representing the purchaser of a high-performance sports car at an Intermediate Track trial in London. The purchaser brought a claim for breach of contract and misrepresentation, relying especially on the Sale of Goods Act 1979. Judgment was entered in full against the dealer which supplied the car.

- Advising, and drafting a Defence for, a major distributor of laser cutting machines facing a High Court claim for over half a million pounds, arising from the supply of machinery alleged to have been of unsatisfactory quality.
- Advising the executors of deceased's person's estate, who were being sued by a well-known estate agency for fees alleged to have become due following the sale of a valuable house in London.
- Drafting Particulars of Claim for a firm of independent financial planners, who are seeking to recover damages for breach of contract from a former agent, caused by its outlay pursuant to an FCA redress scheme.
- Representing a firm of auditors in its claim against a former client for unpaid fees. The former client counterclaimed, but the matter settled before trial on terms favourable to the firm of auditors.
- Representing a former director of a film production company in a claim against the company for various financial losses.
- Advising a transport company in a contractual dispute with a public authority which is seeking to rectify a licence it granted to the company. The licence is alleged to have been agreed on the basis of a mutual mistake.

William is a member of the Commercial Bar Association.

Construction & Engineering

William is developing a broad construction practice, which includes advising, drafting pleadings and adjudication documents, and representing litigants at interim and final hearings. He is able to advise clients on adjudication law and procedure, standard form contracts, the Building Safety Act 2022, latent defects insurance, new home warranties, developer/builder insolvency, party wall disputes, and limitation periods. He accepts appropriate instructions on a direct access basis, which can be an efficient way for developers, builders, self-builders and construction professionals to obtain focussed legal advice and representation.

Current and recent work includes:

- Representing a construction company resisting an attempted "smash and grab" adjudication by one of its sub-contractors.
- Advising a construction company on its contractual dispute with an architect. The dispute involved the issue of whether or not certain RIBA stages had been completed, with the result that certain fees had become due.
- Representing a major insurance company in a series of subrogated recoveries against construction companies arising from new home warranties, including advising on options for recovery where the target companies were insolvent.
- Successfully representing a provider of plumbing and heating services in its application to set aside default judgment entered against it by a self-builder.
- Successfully defending a homeowner at trial, in circumstances where the homeowner was accused of breaching a Party Wall Award in the course of a construction project. The case raised some unusual issues concerning jurisdiction, limitation and declaratory relief.
- Advising a construction company facing a potential Building Liability Order arising from alleged breaches of the Defective Premises Act 1972.
- Advising a building developer on the status and effect of a series of written and oral agreements made with a firm of architects.

- Advising a major insurer on subsidence damage alleged to have been caused by the negligent construction of a building's foundations.
- Drafting a Defence for a provider of Building Information Modelling who is alleged to have derailed the progress of a major construction project by providing insufficient architectural and technical detail.
- Advising a major insurer on its options in attempting to recover from an insolvent building developer.
- Advising a homeowning couple on their defence and counterclaim to a claim brought by a builder who had abandoned a job but was nonetheless seeking to recover his fees in full.

William is a member of the Technology & Construction Bar Association.

Property Damage

William is developing considerable experience in dealing with property damage claims. He is able to advise on coverage, defence and recovery.

Current and recent work includes:

- Drafting Particulars of Claim in a six-figure claim for property damage arising from an escape of water in a large domestic property.
- Drafting a Defence for a sub-contractor accused of having negligently caused an escape of water in a new-build block of flats, leading to a six-figure claim for damages.
- Advising a well-known horticultural charity on the recovery of its losses arising from an escape of water caused by a sub-contractor, which led to the temporary closure of its public facilities and consequential financial losses.
- Advising an insurer seeking to pursue a subrogated claim for a contribution from a sub-contractor who caused an escape of water at a new housing project.
- Advising an insurer seeking a subrogated recovery from the manufacturer of a vacuum cleaner which combusted whilst charging, causing significant fire damage to a domestic property.
- Advising a builder facing a six-figure claim for property damage. The builder was accused of having negligently caused a fire to break out on site, with the result that a building was severely damaged. William also drafted the Defence, and represented the defendant at a CCMC in the High Court (TCC).
- Drafting a Defence for a major water utility accused of causing damage to property as a consequence of negligent repair work. The claim was subsequently discontinued.
- Advising an insurer on coverage where its insured had notified a substantial property damage claim arising from a construction project. The property in question belonged to a third party, with the result that the policy's operative clause was not triggered.
- Securing the dismissal of claim for vehicle damage on the basis that the documentary evidence regarding diminution in value/reasonable cost of repair was inadequate and unconvincing.
- Successfully defending a well-known water and sewerage undertaker against a claim for property damage by one of its customers. The court was satisfied that the Water Industry Act 1991, as interpreted by the senior courts, provided a complete defence to the claim.
- Successfully defending a homeowner at trial, in circumstances where the homeowner was accused of breaching a Party Wall Award and causing damage to a neighbouring property. The case raised some unusual issues concerning jurisdiction, limitation and declaratory relief.

Insurance Fraud

William is developing a busy practice in insurance and motor fraud. He regularly advises clients at all stages of proceedings: from pleadings and pre-action disclosure applications, through interim applications and hearings, to trials on the fast and intermediate tracks.

Current and recent work includes:

- Advising and representing several different insurers in a series of remarkably similar claims by motorcycle delivery riders in London, all of whom are represented by the same firm of solicitors.
- Successfully representing several different insurers at trials of grossly exaggerated claims for vehicle damage.
- Advising and representing an operator of public transport in a series of exaggerated and/or dishonest claims for personal injury, property damage and credit hire.
- Securing the dismissal of a claim by a driver who accepted under cross-examination that he had previously made almost 20 motor and personal injury claims.
- Advising an insurer on a claim for water damage to a luxury car, which appeared to have been dishonestly staged by the car's owner.

Credit Hire

William has extensive experience of credit hire work on the fast and intermediate tracks. He acts exclusively for defendant insurers, usually achieving a substantial reduction in the damages payable or having the claim dismissed. In several cases he has identified fraudulent elements during preparation or trial, leading to the claims being struck out or dismissed. He often attends application hearings arising from credit hire claims, typically involving strike out, relief from sanctions, disclosure, wasted costs, or third-party costs orders.

Current and recent work includes:

- Advising and representing the defendant in a claim for hire charges of almost £100,000, which is listed for an Intermediate Track trial following a series of interim applications.
- Defending a claim for almost £80,000 in credit hire charges, disbursements and costs at a fast track trial. Near the end of the hearing, the court gave permission for the claimant to accept a Part 36 offer of c. £7,000 and pay the defendant's costs of over £9,000.
- Having a credit hire claim for almost £18,000 dismissed with defendant's costs at a fast track trial, in reliance on an unusual legal argument concerning bailment and pure economic loss.
- Having a claim dismissed on the grounds that the claimant accepted under cross-examination they had never seen any of the documents in the trial bundle before, except for their own inaccurate witness statement.
- Drafting a strike-out application, having previously raised a number of concerns around the claimant's apparent reliance on forged documents and involvement with organised crime. William is also instructed to attend the application hearing.
- Advising on a wasted costs application following a series of procedural blunders by the claimant and their representatives.
- Attending two application hearings concerning a claimant who believed that their ethical and

- environmental beliefs entitled them to hire a luxury electric car at many times the basic hire rate.
- Advising on a strike-out application made on the grounds that the claimant had apparently signed their witness statement under duress from their legal representatives. The claimant discontinued shortly before the hearing.
- Successfully applying for permission to disapply QOCS pro-rata and recover over 90% of the Defendant's costs in a mixed credit hire/personal injury case.

Personal Injury

William regularly advises defendants in Employers' Liability, Public Liability and Road Traffic Accident claims, settles pleadings on their behalf, and represents them at trial. He often defends claims in which personal injury is combined with property damage, credit hire and/or housing disrepair. He regularly achieves successful results for his clients by (where appropriate) cross-examining claimants on their inconsistencies, and patiently undermining their credibility in the eyes of the court.

Current and recent work includes:

- Advising and representing one of five defendants in a high-value High Court claim, which raises complex issues of causation, agency and directors' duties.
- Successfully representing a social housing association at a fast track trial. The claimant alleged that he had injured himself by tripping on a loose paving stone which the association had negligently failed to repair, but the court found that he was mistaken.
- Striking out a claim for personal injury and consequential losses arising from an alleged motorcycle accident, in circumstances where there were serious doubts as to whether the accident or injury had actually occurred.
- Successfully representing a provider of building materials at a fast track trial. The claimant alleged that he had slipped whilst unloading materials, due to the defendant employer's negligent failure to clear up an oil spill. The court found that the claimant was mistaken.
- Successfully resisting a claimant's application for an interim payment to fund a private operation, in circumstances where there were serious doubts as to whether the claim was an honest one.
- Successfully defending a claim against a well-known chain of pharmacies for psychiatric injuries alleged to have been caused by a delay in providing medicine to the claimant.

William is a member of the Personal Injuries Bar Association.

Inquests & Public Inquiries

William regularly represents families and other interested persons at inquests and PIRHs, including highly sensitive inquests arising from fatal accidents, suicide, suspected suicide, and/or allegations of misconduct by state entities. He is well-versed in the legal tests around scope of inquest, evidence, causation, neglect and Article 2. His life experience and maturity enable him to interact with the various participants with respect and sensitivity, and to be robust where appropriate.

Current and recent work includes:

- Representing a local authority at the inquest of a vulnerable older person who had been in the care

of multiple state agencies.

- Representing a private health care provider at an inquest concerning a person whose death is alleged to have been partially caused by failures at a private care home.
- Representing the family at the inquest of a person who died in hospital having suffered an adverse reaction to an illegal substance. A key issue at the hearing was the excessive length of time it took for an ambulance to arrive.
- Representing the family at the four-day inquest of a person who died shortly after being released from police custody, having had a life-sustaining medical device seized by the police.
- Representing the family at a three-day jury inquest concerning the accidental death of an elderly person in a care home, including extensive submissions on neglect.
- Representing the family of a person who took their own life after a series of alleged failures by state entities to care properly for them.

William can represent interested persons on a direct access basis, where appropriate.

Property

William's cases often raise land and property law issues, particularly in the context of professional liability, insurance, construction, property damage and personal injury. He has acted for residential landlords and tenants, commercial landlords and tenants, housing associations, property management companies, estate/letting agents and their clients, and conveyancing solicitors. He accepts instructions in housing disrepair claims and in landlord and tenant disputes, including on a direct access basis where appropriate. He also accepts instructions in mixed housing disrepair/personal injury claims.

Qualifications

- Bar Practice Course (Outstanding); The University of Law
- GDL (Distinction); The University of Law
- MA Music (First Class); King's College, Cambridge

Memberships

- BILA
- COMBAR
- PIBA
- PNBA
- TECBAR