

Peter
Skelton
KC

Call: 1997 KC: 2016



Peter Skelton KC specialises in Inquests, Public Inquiries, and complex Personal Injury Litigation.

Peter is recognised by both the Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners as a top-tier silk in public inquiries and inquests. He has appeared in many of the most high-profile cases of the last 25 years and is one of very few silks to be regularly instructed by the full range of parties: chairs and tribunals, coroners, families, commercial organisations, charities, government departments and local authorities.

Most recently, Peter has been instructed in the Thirlwall Inquiry, the Covid Inquiry, the Lampard Inquiry, the Infected Blood Inquiry, the Undercover Policing Inquiry, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, the Reading Terror Attack Inquests, the Gosport Memorial Hospital Inquests, the Birmingham Bombings Inquests (1974), and the Stephen Port Inquests.

Peter's personal injury practice encompasses the full spectrum of complex and high-value litigation, including human rights, clinical negligence, catastrophic injuries, physical and sexual abuse, and international claims.

He has been instructed in many high-profile claims and group actions by both claimants and defendants. These include the claims arising from the abuse perpetrated by Jimmy Savile, Max Clifford and David Fuller, and the malpractice of former surgeons Ian Paterson and Rob Jones; together with the claims brought in respect of Guantánamo Bay detention camp, Brooke House Immigration Removal Centre, Winterbourne View Hospital, and the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in the 1950s.

Before taking silk, Peter was appointed to the Attorney General's A, B and C panels, and as a Special Advocate. For many years, he has acted for government departments and agencies in some of their most sensitive cases.

Peter recently founded the Inquests and Inquiries Bar Association. He is also the co-author of two of the leading books in the field, *Public Inquiries* (Oxford) and *The Inquest Book* (Hart).

Recommendations:

- *“Peter has a wonderful way with words; he brings the drafting to life. He is pragmatic and he reads the room well.”* (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- *“Peter is practical and logical but he cares about the clients. His advocacy is fantastic – it is very sharp and very cutting. He leads witnesses to a place no one saw coming.”* (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- *“Peter is a calm and reassuring presence who has the gravitas of a silk but all the soft skills necessary in dealing with bereaved families.”* (Chambers & Partners 2026)
- *“He is cuttngly clever, and has exceptional foresight and strategy.”* (Legal 500 2026)
- *“Peter has an ability to cut through incredibly complex nets of interrelationships between state agencies. He leads the coroner to a clear picture of what happened.”* (Chambers & Partners 2025)
- *“Peter is a first rate draftsman with a real flair for capturing complicated questions in clear and easily understood prose.”* (Legal 500 2025)
- *“Peter Skelton is an extremely strong advocate. He is always careful to ensure that he understands our clients’ views and puts these forward clearly and effectively.”* (Chambers & Partners 2024)
- *“He is a delight to work with. He only speaks when it is absolutely necessary and is incredibly knowledgeable about inquests and inquiries. He is very collaborative and supportive of junior members of the Bar.”* (Chambers & Partners 2023)
- *“He has the gravitas and people listen to him, but he is also very accessible.” “He’s a thoughtful, thorough and tenacious advocate for his clients.”* (Chambers & Partners 2022)
- *“Very knowledgeable, excellent in court and on paper.” “His grasp of detail is extraordinary and he is able to distil large volumes of documents into a series of simple propositions for witnesses. His style of questioning is relaxed yet forensic and precise.”* (Chambers & Partners 2021)
- *‘His written work and advocacy are impeccable, and his manner in hearings is just right.’* (Legal 500 2021)
- *“He has a real mastery of the factual detail and is superb at assimilating material and evidence and getting on top of it all.” “He’s the most relaxed advocate I’ve ever seen; he’s very gentle with witnesses but always gets his point across even when it’s very difficult.” “He’s almost flawless in court: completely fluid and sensible. He doesn’t take bad points and when he has a good one he puts it across efficiently and persuasively.”* (Chambers & Partners 2020)
- *“He has a relaxed bedside manner that hides a ruthless streak that cuts to the core of any issue.”*(Legal 500 2019)
- *“He’s very bright, effective and has a very nice, laid-back manner in court.” “He is a really superb public lawyer.”* (Chambers & Partners 2019)
- *“He can plot the way through complex issues and his knowledge of coronial law is superb.”*(Legal 500 2018)
- *“A confident advocate and good communicator.”* (Legal 500 2017)
- *“He comes up with novel ideas, provides a realistic and sensible evaluation of cases and deals with difficult clients well. He just navigates the course through.” “Great on his feet, thinks quickly, sharp as a razor and very articulate.”* (Chambers & Partners 2017)
- *“Simply excellent.”* (Legal 500 2016)

“He is cuttngly clever, and has exceptional foresight and strategy.”

Legal 500 2026

“Peter has a wonderful way with words; he brings the drafting to life. He is pragmatic and he reads the room well.”

"He is a delight to work with. He only speaks when it is absolutely necessary and is incredibly knowledgeable about inquests and inquiries. He is very collaborative and supportive of junior members of the Bar."

Chambers & Partners 2023

"Very responsive, collegiate, strategic, and able to process voluminous documentation and spot the key issues arising. Very effective advocate in isolating key propositions of fact and law, and very good at reading when the court has taken on board his arguments."

Legal 500 2023

"Peter is a very, very accomplished inquests and inquiries practitioner. He really gets it and he uses the law to his client's best advantage."

Chambers & Partners 2023

Inquests

Peter acts for all participants in inquests, including families, commercial organisations, state bodies, and coroners. Many of his cases arise from high-profile events, are acutely sensitive, and involve multiple parties. He is experienced in providing strategic advice before, during and after proceedings before Coroners and in the High Court, Divisional Court, and Court of Appeal.

In 2024, he represented the families of the victims of the terrorist attack in Reading in 2020 in which three men were fatally stabbed, and the families of the patients who died from suspected over-medication at the Gosport Memorial Hospital. In 2022, he was instructed by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the inquests into the murders by serial killer Stephen Port; and by the tram operator in the inquests arising from the 2016 Croydon tram crash.

Prior to that, Peter was Counsel to the Judge Coroners in the inquests into the 1974 terrorist bombings in Birmingham and into the sudden death of the Russian businessman Alexander Perepilichnyy.

Selected Cases

- Reading Terror Attack Inquests – for the families
- Gosport Memorial Hospital Inquests – for the families
- Stephen Port Inquests – for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police
- Croydon Tram Crash Inquests – for the tram operator
- Birmingham Inquests (1974) – for the Coroner
- Alexander Perepilichnyy Inquest – for the Coroner
- Belly Mujinga Inquest – for the train operator
- Alice Gross Inquest – for the Home Office

- Brecon Beacons Inquest – for the Coroner
- In Amenas Inquest – for the Coroner
- *R (Wandsworth Borough Council) v HM Senior Coroner for Inner West London* [2021] EWHC 801 (Admin), [2021] Inq LR 105
- *Farrell v HM Coroner for North East Hampshire*[2021] EWHC 778 (Admin), [2021] Inq LR 95
- *R (Hambleton) v Coroner for the Birmingham Inquests (1974)* [2018] EWCA Civ 2081, [2019] 1 WLR 3417
- *Secretary of State for the Home Department v HM Senior Coroner for Surrey*[2017] EWHC 3001 (Admin), [2017] 4 WLR 191
- *Tyrrell v HM Senior Coroner for County Durham and Darlington* [2016] EWHC 1892 (Admin), (2016) 153 BMLR 208

Public Inquiries

Peter acts for all participants in the inquiries, including families, commercial organisations, government departments, charities, and the tribunals themselves.

Most recently, he has been instructed by a group of families in the Thirlwall Inquiry, a healthcare provider in the Lampard Inquiry, the Chancellor of Exchequer in the Infected Blood Inquiry, and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in the Undercover Policing Inquiry.

Previously, Peter was Counsel to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, where he led the Accountabilities and Reparations Investigation, which resulted in the Government’s commitment to change the law of limitation relating to historic sexual abuse claims; and Counsel to the Rosemary Nelson Inquiry, which investigated alleged state collusion in the murder of the Northern Irish solicitor by loyalist paramilitaries. He wrote the chapter on ‘The Administration of the Inquiry’ in *Public Inquiries*, which provides guidance on the roles and responsibilities of counsel to the inquiry, the inquiry solicitor and the inquiry secretary.

Peter also acted for the families of the victims in the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry and the Royal Liverpool Children’s Inquiry; and for two charities, the Patients Association and Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA), in the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry.

Selected Cases

- Thirlwall Inquiry – for a group of families of Lucy Letby’s victims
- Lampard Inquiry – for a healthcare provider
- Covid Inquiry – for the Cabinet Office and the serving and former Cabinet Secretaries
- Infected Blood Inquiry – for the Chancellor of the Exchequer
- Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI) – for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police
- Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) – for the Inquiry
- Leveson Inquiry – for the Mayor’s Office of Policing and Crime
- Al-Sweady Inquiry – for the Iraqi judges
- Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry – for the Patients Association and Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA)

- Rosemary Nelson Inquiry – for the Inquiry
- Royal Liverpool Children’s Inquiry – for the families
- Bristol Royal Infirmary Public Inquiry – for the families

Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence

Peter acts for claimants and defendants in a wide range of complex and high-value personal injury and clinical negligence litigation. His cases routinely involve catastrophic injuries, allegations of human rights violations, or events in foreign jurisdictions. He is also experienced in claims arising from allegations of physical and sexual abuse of adults and children.

Over the past 25 years, Peter has been instructed in many high-profile claims – including:

- Brook House Immigration Removal Centre
- David Fuller
- Ian Paterson
- Winterbourne View Hospital
- Rob Jones
- Guantánamo Bay Litigation
- Jimmy Savile
- Max Clifford
- Kenyan Emergency Group Litigation (‘Mau Mau’ litigation)
- *Belhaj v Straw* [2014] EWCA Civ 1394, [2015] 2 WLR 1105
- *Al Rawi v The Security Service* [2011] UKSC 34, [2011] 1 AC 531
- Nationwide Organ Group Litigation [2004] EWHC 644 (QB), [2005] 2 WLR 358
- Undercover policing group litigation

Selected Cases

- **David Fuller.**
- **Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI).**
- **Jimmy Savile.**
- **Max Clifford.**
- **Kenyan Emergency Group Litigation:** (‘Mau Mau’ litigation).
- ***Belhaj v Straw* [2014] EWCA Civ 1394, [2015] 2 WLR 1105.**
- ***Kalma v African Mineral Ltd.***
- ***Pike v Indian Hotels Co Ltd* [2013] EWHC 4096 (QB).**
- *Al Rawi v The Security Service* [2011] UKSC 34, [2011] 1 AC 531.
- **Guantánamo Bay litigation.**
- Nationwide Organ Group Litigation [2004] EWHC 644 (QB), [2005] 2 WLR 358.

“He’s very bright and an absolutely excellent advocate. He puts clients at ease.” “Very hard-working, thorough and bright.” (Chambers & Partners 2021)

‘His written work and advocacy are impeccable, and his manner in hearings is just right.’ (Legal 500 2021)

"A very impressive barrister." "He is calm, excellent on his feet and very pragmatic." (Chambers & Partners 2020)

'He has a relaxed bedside manner that hides a ruthless streak that cuts to the core of any issue.' (Legal 500 2019)

"Very personable and pragmatic." "Very good with clients." "Excellent on his feet." (Chambers & Partners 2019)

"He's very bright and an absolutely excellent advocate. He puts clients at ease." "Very hard-working, thorough and bright." "Excellent to work with. He is very knowledgeable and provides clear accurate advice." "A shrewd tactician who is willing to push hard on difficult cases. He has an empathetic manner with vulnerable clients." (Chambers & Partners 2018)

"An approachable silk with a first-rate brain." (Legal 500 2018)

"Very assiduous and very practical." (Chambers & Partners 2017)

Appointments

- Deputy High Court Judge
- Attorney General's A Panel of Counsel (2014-2016)
- Special Advocate (2009)
- Attorney General's B Panel of Counsel (2009)
- Attorney General's C Panel of Counsel (2004)

Awards

- Harmsworth Scholarship from Middle Temple to the Inns of Court School of Law (1996)
- Economic & Social Research Council Scholarship to the University of Cambridge (1995)
- Harmsworth Scholarship from Middle Temple to the College of Law (1994)
- Academic Scholarship to the University of California (1992)

Education

- Called to the Bar of Northern Ireland (2006)
- Master of Philosophy, University of Cambridge (1996)
- Common Professional Examination, College of Law London (1995)
- BA Hons English Literature (First Class), University of York (1994)

Memberships

- PIBA
- PNBA
- Inquests and Inquiries Bar Association

Publications

- Contributing author of *The Inquest Casebook* Neil Garnham QC and Caroline Cross, Hart Publishing, 2016.
- Contributing author of *Public Inquiries* Jason Beer QC, Oxford University Press, 2011, Second Edition forthcoming.
- Law Pod UK Ep. 111 & 35 – 37.
- Contributor to the [UK Human Rights Blog](#).