

Peter
Skelton
QC

Call: 1997 QC: 2016



Peter Skelton QC's practice encompasses public inquiries, inquests, human rights litigation, clinical negligence, judicial review, national security and personal injury litigation, with a particular emphasis on multi-party actions and claims arising in foreign jurisdictions. He acts for both claimants and defendants.

"Peter has excellent technical knowledge and really understands inquiry law and the nuances of how to present evidence at an inquiry – a first-class inquiry law brain with the appropriate understanding of the need for victims and survivors to engage with the process and an appropriate advocacy style to accommodate this."

Legal 500 2022

"He has the gravitas and people listen to him, but he is also very accessible."

Chambers & Partners 2022

"He's a thoughtful, thorough and tenacious advocate for his clients." "His written work is excellent."

Chambers & Partners 2022

Inquests

Peter has immense experience in inquests and coronial law, having spent over 20 years representing coroners and interested persons, from bereaved families to government departments, including the MOJ and the MOD.

He has undertaken many complex and high-profile inquests involving unlawful killing, national security, state detention, health and safety, and medical or psychiatric treatment. Several of these cases have involved hearings in the High Court, Divisional Court and Court of Appeal.

In 2020, Peter acted for the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in the inquests into the deaths of the victims of serial killer Stephen Port; and for the tram operator in the inquests arising from the Croydon tram derailment in 2016. Between 2016 and 2019 he was counsel to the inquests into the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings and the sudden death of the Russian businessman Alexander Perepilichnyy.

Peter has a particular interest in inquests that engage the state's responsibilities under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, 'the right to life'. In 2014 and 2015, he was invited by the Chief Coroner to provide a series of lectures on this subject to the coroners of England and Wales.

Listen to Peter discuss the impact of COVID-19 on inquests in [Episode 111 of Law Pod UK](#) here.

"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)

Selected Cases

- **Stephen Port Inquests.**
- **Croydon Tram Inquests.**
- *R (Wandsworth Borough Council) v HM Senior Coroner for Inner West London [2021] EWHC 801 (Admin).*
- *Farrell v HM Coroner for North East Hampshire [2021] EWHC 778 (Admin).*
- **Birmingham Inquests (1974).**

- **Coroner for Birmingham Inquests (1974) v Hambleton [2018] EWCA Civ 2081.**
- **Alexander Perepilichnyy Inquest.**
- **Secretary of State for the Home Department v HM Senior Coroner for Surrey [2017] EWHC 3001 (Admin), [2017] 4 WLR 191.**
- **Alice Gross Inquest.**
- **Brecon Beacons Inquest.**
- **In Amenas Inquest.**

Public Inquiries

Peter has been instructed in several major public inquiries over the last 20 years, most recently the Undercover Policing Inquiry (for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police), the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (as counsel to the inquiry), the Leveson Inquiry (for the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime), the Al-Sweady Inquiry (for Iraqi judges), and the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry (for two national healthcare charities). He has previously represented bereaved families in the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry and the Royal Liverpool Children's Inquiry. From 2005 to 2009, he was counsel to the Rosemary Nelson Inquiry, which investigated allegations of state collusion in the solicitor's murder.

In recent years, Peter has also acted for groups of victims and survivors of sexual abuse by David Fuller, Jimmy Savile and Max Clifford. He has also represented claimants in several other high-profile group actions, including Ian Paterson (breast surgery) and Rob Jones (gynaecological surgery). Previously, he acted for the claimants in the Winterbourne View Litigation the Cornwall Partnership Trust Litigation (institutional neglect and abuse), and the Nationwide Organ Group Litigation.

On the defendant side, Peter has acted for the Metropolitan Police in a group actions arising allegations of inappropriate sexual liaisons by undercover police officers, and in the claims brought by the families of the four victims of serial killer Stephen Port. He has also represented the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the Kenyan Emergency Group Litigation, which involved allegations of mistreatment by the Colonial Government of Kenya in the 1950s; and was instructed by an international mining corporation in a multi-party human rights claim arising from allegations of police brutality in Sierra Leone.

From 2009 to 2010, Peter was a member of the senior counsel team in the Guantánamo Bay Litigation, representing five Government departments accused of complicity in the rendition and torture of detainees by the United States. In 2011, he appeared in the Supreme Court case which determined whether the courts in England and Wales have a common law power to order secret hearings (*Al Rawi v The Security Service* [2011] 1 AC 531); and in 2014, he appeared in the Court of Appeal in *Belhaj v Straw* [2015] 2 WLR 1105.

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Selected Cases

- **Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI)**
- **Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).**
- **Kenyan Emergency Group Litigation:** ('Mau Mau' litigation)
- **Belhaj v Straw [2015] 2 WLR 1105**
- **Al Rawi v The Security Service [2011] 1 AC 531**
- **Leveson Inquiry.**
- **Al-Sweady Inquiry.**
- **Guantánamo Bay Litigation**
- **Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry.**
- **Rosemary Nelson Inquiry.**
- **Ayling Inquiry.**
- **Royal Liverpool Children's Inquiry.**
- **Bristol Royal Infirmary Public Inquiry.**

Clinical Negligence

Peter has been instructed by claimants and defendants in several major international personal injury cases. Recently, this includes a claim brought by the son of a former undercover police officer for psychiatric injuries.

These include (1) the *Guantánamo Bay* litigation, which focused on allegations of extraordinary rendition and torture by the US and UK governments, (2) *Pike v Indian Hotels Co Ltd* [2013] EWHC 4096 (QB), which arose from the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008, (3) *Kalma v African Mineral Ltd*, a multiparty human rights action arising from allegations of police brutality in Sierra Leone, and (4) the *Kenyan Emergency Group Litigation*

arising from allegations of mistreatment by the colonial authorities during the Mau Mau Emergency in Kenya in the 1950s.

"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)

Selected Cases

- **Kenyan Emergency Group Litigation:** ('Mau Mau' litigation)
- **Kalma v African Mineral Ltd**
- **Pike v Indian Hotels Co Ltd [2013] EWHC 4096 (QB)**
- **Guantánamo Bay litigation**

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

Publications

- Law Pod UK Ep. 111 & 35 – 37.
- 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.