

John Kelsey-Fry KC

Call: 1978 | Silk: 2000

"The best advocate in the land"

Chambers and Partners



John Kelsey-Fry KC is Head of Cloth Fair Chambers. He is widely recognised as one of the leading silks at the Criminal Bar. He is outstanding in front of a jury, has exceptional advocacy skills and his wealth of experience is almost unparalleled. As one commentator says, "There is rarely a high-profile criminal case where he is not instructed, and his level of commitment and can-do approach is inspirational".

John is particularly sought after in areas of business and financial crime where his criminal expertise is matched by his commercial understanding and his strategic vision. He is exemplary at advising boards and individuals alike.

He is also known for high-profile general crime and is often cited for his work involving defamation where his cross-examination skills have proved game-changing. Further, he is commended for his work in the sports sector, having a wide range of experience of sporting and regulatory tribunals.

Current and recent instructions include:

Represented Natwest in the first ever criminal prosecution by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) of a financial institution under anti-money laundering laws in the UK.

SFO v Barclays (winner – Most Important Court Case 2020, GIR). For the former head of investment banking in the Middle-East, acquitted of all charges re multi-billion pound capital raise in 2008 following a five-month trial at the Central Criminal Court.

Advised individuals in relation to a number of SFO investigations including ENRC, Balli and Unaoil as well as advising a Premier League Football Club in relation to an ongoing HMRC investigation.

Other notable instructions in recent years include:

- HKSAR – v – Kwok: Successfully defended the property tycoon, the only defendant to be acquitted in Hong Kong's largest ever graft case.
- R -v- Olympus Corporation: acted for the company in securing a full acquittal regarding Companies Act charges brought by the SFO.

- R -v- W: Successfully defended the CEO of a raw materials company charged by the SFO with conspiracy to defraud.
- R -v- Huhne: Represented the former Energy Secretary charged with perverting the course of justice.
- R -v- C: Successfully represented the former Director of iSoft in criminal and regulatory proceedings.