

Chambers UK Awards 2025

Celebrating legal excellence across the UK

These awards will honour the finest legal teams in the UK for their work in a range of practice areas. They will be based on the rigorous research that has been conducted for the 2025 Chambers UK Guide and will recognise:

- Outstanding legal work and achievements
- Impressive strategic growth
- Excellence in client service delivery
- The work of regional and national firms

Lifetime Achievement Award

Michael Francies of Weil, Gotshal & Manges

Mike Francies has enjoyed an outstanding career and is widely seen as one of the most influential transactional lawyers in the City. Since becoming managing partner of Weil, Gotshal & Manges in 2000, he has guided his firm to become one of the strongest M&A and private equity outfits in the UK. In doing so, his career has embodied two widespread phenomena that we have seen over the last few decades: the evolution of private equity into the central role it now plays in many firms' strategies, and the growing might of US-headquartered firms in London.

Mike's first ranking in Chambers came in the Corporate Finance category in 2001. He gained his first ranking for private equity in 2003 and within a few years boasted top-tier positions in both private equity and M&A, which he enjoyed until his recent retirement.

Over the years many GCs have praised Mike, especially for his hardworking manner, his commercial acumen and his ability to find solutions. Clients have noted that he "works his socks off" at a rate that belies his seniority and "has a brain the size of a bigger planet than Earth." One in-house counsel summed up Mike by saying, "Whatever it is you have to have, he has just got it" while another describes him as "a guru of private equity."

It is fitting that Mike is the first winner of the Lifetime Achievement award at our inaugural Chambers UK awards.

Administrative and Public Law Team of the Year

Bindmans
DLA Piper
Fieldfisher

Gold Jennings
Hogan Lovells
Kingsley Napley
Leigh Day

Winner: Leigh Day

Leigh Day continues to be a dominant force in the Administrative and Public Law sector, consistently ranked as a Band 1 firm. With its partners and associates leading high-profile challenges in immigration, planning, environmental law and data protection, it is frequently hailed as “the best claimant public law firm” in the UK.

Commercial Disputes Team of the Year

Clifford Chance
CMS
Enyo Law
Harcus Parker
Humphries Kerstetter
Peters & Peters
Quinn Emanuel

Winner: Peters & Peters

Peters & Peters has appeared in some of the most prominent commercial cases in the courts recently, having recently won the mammoth Tuna Bonds litigation for Mozambique whilst also appearing in other commendable matters including the Post Office litigation.

Employment Team of the Year

Baker McKenzie
DAC Beachcroft
Farrer & Co
Fox & Partners
Fox Williams
Harbottle & Lewis
Lewis Silkin

Winner: Lewis Silkin

Lewis Silkin has solidified its position as a leading firm in the London employment market, holding a Band 1 ranking in the Employer, Senior Executive and High Court Litigation Employment tables. With a top-tier team of partners and associates, 15 of which are ranked, the firm stands out for its unmatched depth of knowledge and wide-ranging expertise. Clients praise its ability to consistently add value to matters, making it a clear choice for the Employment Team of the Year.

Energy, Projects or Infrastructure Team of the Year

Ashurst
Clifford Chance

Herbert Smith Freehills
Hogan Lovells
Lux Nova Partners
Michelmores
White & Case

Winner: White & Case

White & Case has a strong reputation as a market leader across the board in energy, projects and infrastructure. The team is extensively involved in impressive projects work internationally, particularly in the Middle East and CIS region. It continues to excel in oil and gas, alongside its standout work in other areas, such as its involvement in NEOM's green hydrogen financing in Saudi Arabia. Beyond this, the group garners significant praise for its infrastructure offering.

ESG Risk Firm of the Year

Clifford Chance
DLA Piper
Freshfields
Hogan Lovells
Kirkland & Ellis
Leigh Day
Linklaters

Winner: Linklaters

Linklaters advises an impeccable list of blue-chip clients on complex Environmental, Social and Governance-related risk factors. Its team in London, led by partner Rachel Barrett and founded by Vanessa Havard-Williams, is praised for its impressively broad scope of risk advisory mandates for these clients and for the global nature of its work. Clients of its ESG risk advisory team include the National Grid, Barclays Bank and Porsche.

Finance Team of the Year

A&O Shearman
Freshfields
Kirkland & Ellis
Milbank
Paul Hastings
Paul Weiss
Proskauer

Winner: A&O Shearman

A year that saw Allen & Overy and Shearman join forces to create a transatlantic giant also saw the combined firms' finance teams go from strength to strength. The group continues to excel on both the borrower and lender fronts, maintaining its band one rankings in both areas. Similarly, A&O Shearman's Debt and Equity Capital Markets specialists top the ranking tables and

have continued to impress despite adverse market conditions. The offering is truly market leading and well deserving of the award for finance team of the year.

FinTech Firm of the Year

Bird & Bird
Goodwin
Hogan Lovells
Latham & Watkins
RPC

Winner: Hogan Lovells

Hogan Lovells has market-leading expertise in FinTech and one of the largest and most highly regarded teams for this work in the London market, led by Jonathan Chertkow and John Salmon. Its FinTech clients include Zopa Bank, the Open Banking Implementation Entity and tokenisation specialists PV01, whom it recently advised on the issuance of natively digital bonds backed by US Treasuries and issued on the Ethereum blockchain. Sources praised the firm for its “great ability to move from advising financial services to new startups.”

International Arbitration Team of the Year

Debevoise & Plimpton
Quinn Emanuel
Stewarts
Three Crowns
White & Case

Winner: Three Crowns

Three Crowns remains a go-to in arbitration on both the commercial and Investor-State sides. The firm is noted as a “very sharp law firm with major clients and an appetite for out of the box thinking”. It consistently acts in some of the largest arbitrations across various industries with notable strength in the oil and gas field, therefore warranting it the title of International Arbitration Team of the Year.

Intellectual Property Team of the Year

A&O Shearman
Bird & Bird
Bristows
Kirkland & Ellis
Powell Gilbert

Winner: Kirkland & Ellis

Kirkland & Ellis has been a byword for exemplary patent litigation work in life sciences and hi-tech consumer electronics for the best part of a decade. 2024 was a year of particular distinction for this celebrated team, culminating in favourable outcomes for clients Lenovo and Xiaomi in two of the most closely watched FRAND cases of recent years, against Interdigital and Panasonic respectively.

Litigation Funder of the Year

Bench Walk Advisors

Harbour

Manolete Partners

Therium Capital Management

Woodsford

Winner: Bench Walk Advisors

Bench Walk has consistently ranked as a top litigation funder in the UK. It wins praise for its boutique, director-led approach and for its ability to fund complex cases with a high degree of responsiveness and transparency. This year, the team has continued to work on a diverse portfolio of group actions, including Professor Carolyn Roberts' opt-out CAT claim against water utility companies and an action against Google relating to the Google Play Store, as well as portfolio funding deals and law firm financing.

M&A or Private Equity Team of the Year

Clifford Chance

Freshfields

Kirkland & Ellis

Latham & Watkins

Linklaters

Slaughter and May

Winner: Freshfields

One of the most impressive attributes of Freshfields' deal practice is the quality it offers on both public M&A and private buyouts. Just one example of its ability to handle the most complex transactions in the market is its representation of UBS on its acquisition of Credit Suisse, which was led by Jennifer Bethlehem. Clients routinely offer superlative reviews, including one GC who says of the practice, "They try to anticipate not just the goals of the whole client in the short term, but also the long-term implications of moving in a certain direction."

National Firm of the Year

Addleshaw Goddard

Browne Jacobson

Burges Salmon

DAC Beachcroft

Freeths

Shoosmiths

TLT

Winner: DAC Beachcroft

Although it has been in the headlines this year for opening new offices in the US and Hong Kong, DAC Beachcroft wins this award off the back of its recent record in the UK. In the last couple of years, it has risen to the top tier of Employment: Employer:

Healthcare; Mental Health; and Employment in Yorkshire. It has also seen promotions in Environment in South West, Health & Safety in Scotland and UK-wide Infrastructure. High quality client service has underpinned the firm's impressive recent performance. One in house counsel praises the firm's ability to provide "pragmatism balanced with deep expertise to cut through highly complex matters [to] provide straightforward advice and solutions." Another interviewee simply says, "I'd cry if they disappeared: we rely on them so much."

Restructuring/Insolvency Team of the Year

Akin
Freshfields
Kirkland & Ellis
Linklaters
Simpson Thacher
Weil, Gotshal & Manges

Winner: Kirkland & Ellis

Nowadays it is rare to find a major restructuring that K&E is not advising on. It wins restructuring/insolvency team of the year in no small part because of the work it wins and its superlative execution. The team's leading roles on the McDermott and Steinhoff restructurings stand out, as does referee feedback painting it as "the go-to firm" and "market leaders for complex restructurings."

TMT Team of the Year

Baker McKenzie
Bird & Bird
Bristows
Lee & Thompson
Level

Winner: Level

This boutique firm, specialising in sport, media and technology, punches well above its weight and has been recognised above all as a leader in sports law for some time. The last two years have been characterised by growth and dynamism for Level, seeing it acquire rankings in Defamation/Reputation Management as well as Media & Entertainment: Music, due as much to the development of up-and-coming partners as to the recruitment of specialists from competitor firms.

Regional Firm of the Year

Carson McDowell
Cripps
Kuits
Pannone
Stevens & Bolton
Walker Morris

Winner: Pannone Corporate

Pannone Corporate has gone from strength to strength since launching in 2014 after Slater Gordon acquired the consumer practices of the legacy firm. It is now a leader in the North West for mid-market corporate deals and private wealth disputes, and boasts strength in IP and employment. In the most recent UK guide, it entered the rankings for Real Estate and Health and Safety. Clients report that its teams “can go head to head” with major international firms and also praise its ability to manage budgets to “deliver great value for money for clients.”

Scottish Firm of the Year

Brodies

BTO

Burness Paull

Davidson Chalmers Stewart

Harper Macleod

Morton Fraser MacRoberts

Shepherd and Wedderburn

Winner: Harper Macleod

In only a little over five years, Harper Macleod has risen from the eighth most well ranked firm in Scotland to the third. In the last year alone, the firm has improved its standing in IP, data protection, employment and public inquiries. Clients praise its clear and practical advice and its ability to explain complicated legal concepts in simple terms.

Individual Category

DEI: Outstanding Contribution

Paulette Mastin – Reed Smith LLP

Paulette Mastin has been a DEI trailblazer for over 20 years, combining her capital markets specialism with a dedication to ensuring the profession becomes more representative, inclusive and equitable. She is a longstanding member of the influential Black Solicitors Network and Chair of the BSN City Group and has advanced DEI efforts significantly at Reed Smith.

Firm Categories

DEI: Outstanding Firm

Sacker & Partners LLP

Despite not having dedicated DEI resource, Sackers has made great progress in its DEI work since the launch of its committee in 2015. Its demographics are extremely diverse, with a suite of progressive policies and schemes to increase access for aspiring lawyers from lower socio-economic backgrounds. A highlight of its DEI programme is its staff network for parents and carers of neurodivergent children.

Pro Bono: Outstanding Firm

Eversheds Sutherland LLP

Eversheds Sutherland wins for its demonstrable commitment to impactful pro bono work. In particular, its collaborative efforts to resettle Afghan members of the judiciary with the Max Planck Foundation tripled capacity for processing referrals. The innovative project greatly extended the usual scope of volunteers that might become involved in pro bono projects with contributors from across the firm.