



William McCormick QC

Call date: 1985 (QC 2010)

Email: wmccormick@elyplace.com

Telephone number: 0207 400 9600

Practice areas

Business

Media and sport

Property
& private client

Employment



William's practice covers a wide range of cases in which his expertise as a litigator means he is in high demand. Directories praise him in the fields of Commercial Dispute Resolution, Company & Partnership & Defamation for his "great legal knowledge and an uncanny ability to identify problems at an early stage", for being "simply excellent with clients" and as "a tenacious and savvy advocate, who is quick to get to grips with the papers". "He is a first class tactician and always impressive on his feet. He has a really lovely advocacy style. He is charming, energetic."

In addition, both the Supreme Court and Privy Council have praised his advocacy in judgments – "spirited and impressive" [2017] UKSC 33 and "force and realism" [2014] UKPC 6. He has also appeared in the Courts of Appeal of both Trinidad & Tobago and the Dubai International Financial Centre.

Business



William handles a broad range of business related cases, with the bulk involving either disputes between businesses or concerning the ownership and conduct of businesses. He is recommended in Commercial Dispute Resolution and Company & Partnership 'Particularly for offshore company disputes' having acted or advised in cases concerning companies in Dominica and the Far East: *Energenics & Neuftec v Hazarika* [2014] EWHC 1845 (Ch), the Bahamas: *Cordes v Sentinel* [2008] UKPC 60 and the Isle of Man.

His domestic caseload often focuses on unfair prejudice/derivative actions of which examples in the public domain are

Rangers Retail v TRFC [2017] EWHC 737 (Ch) – a case concerning the ability of a JV partner to bring a derivative action when the JV agreement purports to exclude any right to sue the defendant.

William McCormick QC

Re Mister Dee International [2009] EWHC 1902 (Ch) and [2010] EWCA Civ 1408 – successfully resisting a claim for unfair prejudice relief and the setting aside of a share transaction in a 3 week hearing and in the Court of Appeal.

An unfair prejudice petition (alleging unfair dilution) was settled following cross-examination of the company's accountant exposing his lack of understanding of the company's solvency.

Cases where directors or employees are said to have breached their duties for their own benefit (or the benefit of others) include

Re Ruskin Private Hire Ltd [2017] resisting claims by a liquidator against the finance director for breach of duty and trust.

Energenics & Neuftec v Hazarika [2014] EWHC 1845 (Ch) resisting claims for damages based on breach of contract and breach of fiduciary duty against the seller of a Dominican company.

Killen v Horseworld Ltd [2012] EWHC 363 (QB) obtaining an account from a defaulting director who diverted corporate opportunities to a new company bought by her after she had been dismissed for attempting a similar diversion .

William led the team representing Rangers International FC, The Rangers Football Club and its Chairman Dave King in the dispute with Mike Ashley and Sports Direct PLC. He secured the dismissal as an abuse of process of an application to commit Mr King to prison [2016] EWHC 85 (Ch), the striking out of parts of that substantive claim and the imposition of terms upon Sports Direct PLC when it sought to discontinue the balance of its claim on the eve of the trial. He was retained on the further actions then brought against and by Sports Direct until the overall disputes were eventually compromised.

In the trial of a dispute between competing funeral plan suppliers, following cross-examination of the claimant company's witnesses the claimant discontinued its claim and its managing director (and final witness) resigned the following day.

William has also acted successfully on behalf of claimants seeking damages from banks and solicitors for mis-selling or mishandling of financial and property transactions, including:

An IT start-up seeking damages for loss of the chance to develop its product because its banker breached the conditions of the loan upon which it was relying.

Individuals and corporations who sustained losses due to negligent advice about the level of risk of certain investments or the ineffectiveness of schemes presented to them as "tax efficient" or who were mis-sold interest rate "swap" products.

In Trinidad & Tobago his cases include disputes over the development/construction of multi-million pound hotel and villa leisure resorts and substantial highway contracts.

Media & sport



William has long been recommended in the field of defamation and privacy where his trial experience and ability to provide early well-focused advice enable him to provide a complete service.

In Barron & others v Collins and UKIP [2018] EWHC 253 (QB) William successfully obtained an order that UKIP was liable for the costs of three Labour MPs in suing UKIP MEP Jane Collins for libel in a speech delivered at the UKIP Conference because it had manipulated her defence of that action in the hope of political advantage in the 2015 general election.

William McCormick QC

William represented Simon Singh in the ground-breaking action brought by the BCA [2010] EWCA Civ 350 which contributed to the passing of the Defamation Act 2013. He successfully represented the claimant in Miller v ANL [2017] UKSC 33 in which the attempt by various newspapers to strike down the recoverability of additional liabilities in publication cases failed.

Other clients in defamation matters that are in the public domain include Dr Liam Fox MP [2013] EWHC 1435 (QB); Sally Bercow, in the claim brought by Lord McAlpine arising out of her use of twitter [2013] EWHC 1342 (QB), Tesla Inc in its libel action against Top Gear [2013] EWCA Civ 152, Richard Dawkins [2012] EWHC 3 (QB) and the claimant in Cooper v Associated Newspapers & Evening Standard (one of the last jury trials for libel) in which he secured an award of £65,000 for an individual accused of masterminding the Millbank riots.

In the allied field of breach of confidence he successfully resisted the intended use by Times Newspapers (in its defence of separate libel proceedings) of documents obtained in breach of confidence: MPS & SOCA v TNL & Gillard [2011] EWHC 776, 1566 & 2705.

He is regularly engaged to advise in cases involving the mis-use of private information and defended Tamara Ecclestone's former partner in the dispute in which each alleged such mis-use against the other and Ms Ecclestone sought unsuccessfully to reclaim the Lamborghini Aventador that she had given him as a birthday present.

In addition to having advised sportspersons on media related issues William has experience of advising on sports contracts (including Formula One) and has experience of contractual disputes in boxing (Calzaghe v Warren) and football, having been instructed on behalf of Glasgow Rangers FC in its long-running dispute with Sports Direct over their commercial relationship.

Property & private client



William handles cases concerning disputes over real property or between private individuals both in the UK and abroad.

Patrick v McKinley [2017] EWCA Civ 2068– successfully representing the respondent to an appeal in respect of alleged beneficial interests in properties arising over a period of years.

Dattani v Damac Ltd (DIFC March 2015) – resisted the appeal of a developer against judgment for damages based upon the failure to complete a residential and retail project in Dubai.

Patel v Mirza [2013] EWHC 1892 (Ch) and [2014] EWCA Civ 1047 – represented the defendant in a case at trial and in the Court of Appeal arguing issues of illegality. In addition to representing businesses in claims against advisors and banks he also acts on behalf of individuals who have been similarly disadvantaged whether by financial mis-selling or (by way of example) the negligent loss of an the opportunity to deal at a profit in shares immediately following an IPO.

William represented the claimant in Court of Appeal in Scullion v BoS (t/a Colleys) [2011] EWCA Civ 693 seeking to establish a duty of care to buy-to-let purchasers.

His case-load in Trinidad & Tobago has covered cases concerning the development/ construction of multi-million pound hotel and villa leisure resorts as well as disputes between companies controlled by high-profile individuals: Real Time Ltd v Renraw Ltd [2014] UKPC 6.

William McCormick QC

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William's case load includes claims for breach of contract and fiduciary duty of senior or high value employees or company officers.

Examples of such matters at trial are:

Re Ruskin Private Hire Ltd [2017] resisting claims by a liquidator against the finance director for breach of duty and trust.

Energenics & Neuftec v Hazarika [2014] EWHC 1845 (Ch) resisting claims for damages based on breach of contract and breach of fiduciary duty against the seller of a Dominican company.

Killen v Horseworld Ltd [2012] EWHC 363 (QB) obtaining an account from a defaulting director who diverted corporate opportunities to a new company bought by her after she had been dismissed for attempting a similar diversion.

He advised Tony Blackburn over his contractual position following his temporary departure from the BBC in 2016 and has advised on sporting contracts including in Formula One.

Regulatory information

Vat number: 447062062

<https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/regulatory-requirements/the-barristers'-register/?ProfileID=34280>