



GUY VASSALL-ADAMS QC

MAIN AREAS OF PRACTICE:

Arbitration
Election law
Human rights law
Media and Information
Mediation
Public Law

Called to the Bar 2000
Appointed to Silk 2016

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Guy Vassall-Adams QC is a leading practitioner in Media and Information Law. He has appeared in many high profile cases across all areas of media law including privacy, data protection, defamation, open justice, contempt of court and freedom of information. He has substantial experience of group litigation, having acted for NGN in the Mobile Telephone Voicemail Interception Litigation and most recently in NGN's own Voicemail Interception Compensation Scheme. He is currently acting for the GMB claimants in the Construction Industry Vetting Information Group Litigation, relating to blacklisting in the construction industry.

Guy is regularly called upon by media organisations to represent them in their most difficult and sensitive open justice cases. Recent cases include challenging an application for private hearings by members of the Saudi Royal Family (Re FI Call Ltd), challenging applications for anonymity sought by bankers implicated in LIBOR rigging allegations (Graiseley Properties v Barclays Bank) and by a prisoner who was convicted of three child murders (R(M) v Parole Board). Guy also acted for Guardian News and Media Ltd in the key recent case on access to court documents (NAB v Serco Ltd). Guy is author of the leading guide, "Reporting Restrictions in the Criminal Courts" (2015), published by the Judicial College. Guy also has extensive experience of reporting restrictions in the Court of Protection and the Family Division and recently represented billionaire Chris Hohn in the publicity issues surrounding his divorce (Cooper-Hohn v Hohn).

Guy has acted in a number of high profile data protection cases. Guy acted for Google Inc. in the claim brought by Max Mosley relating to images on the Google Search Engine and also represented Google Inc. in the claim brought by Swiss banker Daniel Hegglin (both cases settled before trial). Guy has a longstanding interest in the law governing internet intermediaries and acted in the first UK libel case which recognised the availability of the hosting defence under the E-Commerce Regulations (Karim v Newsquest). He also intervened on behalf of Consumer Focus in the judicial review challenging aspects of the Digital Economy Act 2010.

Guy has appeared as junior counsel in a number of Supreme Court and House of Lords cases in the fields of media law and human rights: R(Nicklinson) v Ministry of Justice (Article 8 challenge to the criminal prohibition of assisted suicide), Al Rawi v Security Service (whether there is a power at common law to hold closed hearings), A v Security Service (Investigatory Powers Tribunal: Jurisdiction) (judicial review by former Security Services officer seeking permission to publish a book), Van Colle v

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DIRECTORIES' RECOMMENDATIONS

Guy Vassall-Adams is ranked in defamation and privacy by Chambers & Partners and the Legal 500; he is also recommended by the Legal 500 for Administrative and Public Law.

Comments from Chambers & Partners: "Well respected by the media" (2019); "A good lawyer and a good advocate with a cerebral, dissecting, intellectual approach" (2018); "Displays unparalleled commitment, focus and energy" (2017); "He's extremely thorough, with a great understanding of how law and practice fit together" (2016).

Comments from Legal 500: "Puts in the hours, is good with clients, gives practical advice and is effective in Court. A QC I have no hesitation in recommending to others"; "A tenacious and forceful advocate, completely on top of the technical detail in his field." (2020) "Very meticulous and has great attention to detail" (2018); "His tactical acumen and diligence are both impressive" (2017); "A safe pair of hands, and good with clients" (2016); "a clear and effective advocate, with a particularly good grasp of Article 10 freedom of expression rights" (2015); "praised for his insight, organisation and ability to work like an absolute Trojan" (2013).

Chief Constable of Hertfordshire (whether the police have a duty of care in negligence to prevent a foreseeable crime) and *Jameel v Wall Street Journal Europe* (the defamation case which strengthened the "responsible journalism on a matter of public interest" defence).

Guy is regularly asked to provide strategic advice on topical media law issues, including in relation to proposed legislative changes that are likely to affect the media. Guy has acted as an expert on freedom of expression for the Council of Europe in Russia, Serbia, Kosovo and Armenia.

Guy worked at Doughty Street Chambers before joining Matrix in November 2013. Before coming to the Bar he worked as a television journalist and as a humanitarian affairs officer for the United Nations, where he was one of the founders of the humanitarian news service IRIN. Guy's background in humanitarian work is reflected in the significant amount of pro bono work he undertakes for non-governmental organisations.

SIGNIFICANT CASES

Open Justice

Cooper-Hohn v Hohn [2014] EWHC 2314 (Fam), [2015] 1 FLR 19: sole counsel for applicant husband seeking to prevent details of his financial affairs being reported by the media in high profile divorce proceedings.

NAB v Serco Ltd [2014] EWHC 1255 (QB): sole counsel for Guardian News and Media Ltd in its successful application for access to court documents.

R(Miranda) v Home Secretary [2014] EWHC 255 (Admin): [2014] 1 WLR 3140: intervening on behalf of a coalition of media and free speech organisations in a judicial review challenging aspects of the use of police powers under schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

Re FI Call Ltd [2013] EWCA Civ 819, [2013] 1 WLR 2993: appearing as sole counsel for the media before the Court of Appeal successfully challenging applications for private hearings in commercial litigation involving corruption allegations against members of the Saudi Royal Family.

R(M) v Parole Board [2013] EWHC 1360 (Admin); [2013] EMLR 23: appearing as sole counsel for the media before the Divisional Court successfully challenging anonymity and reporting restrictions obtained by a murderer in judicial review proceedings.

Graiseley Properties v Barclays Bank [2013] EWHC 67 (Comm): appearing as sole counsel for the media before the Commercial Court successfully opposing applications for anonymity sought by Barclays bankers implicated in LIBOR rigging allegations.

Al Rawi v Security Service [2011] UKSC 34; [2012] 1 AC 531: junior counsel for the media intervening in the Supreme Court which held that there is no power at common law to hold closed hearings in civil claims for damages (this was followed by Parliament passing the Justice and Security Act 2013). Sole counsel for the media before the Court of Appeal.

P v Independent Print Ltd [2011] EWCA Civ 756; [2012] 1 FLR 212: sole counsel for Independent Print Ltd before the Court of Appeal in a Court of Protection case concerning media access and court reporting. *Hillingdon LBC v Neary* [2011] EWHC 413 (Fam); [2011] 4 All ER: sole counsel for Independent Print Ltd media in the Stephen Neary Court of Protection case, successfully arguing for the media's right to report the story.

Independent News and Media v A [2010] EWCA Civ 482; [2010] 1 WLR 2262: junior counsel for Independent Newspapers Ltd in the Court of Appeal (sole counsel at first instance) in the first case concerning media access to the Court of Protection (the Derek Paravicini case).

R(Harper) v Aldershot Magistrates Court [2010] EWHC 1319 (Admin): sole counsel for the Press Association in a judicial review successfully challenging the granting of anonymity to police officers being prosecuted for speeding offences.

R (Mohamed) v Foreign Secretary [2010] EWCA Civ 65; [2011] QB 218: junior counsel for the media in the Court of Appeal (sole counsel in the QBD) successfully persuading the court to release parts of a judgment concerning CIA torture which had been redacted on national security grounds.

P v Independent Print Ltd [2011] EWCA Civ 756; [2012] 1 FLR 212: sole counsel for Independent Print Ltd before the Court of Appeal in a Court of Protection case concerning media access and court reporting.

Hillingdon LBC v Neary [2011] EWHC 413 (Fam); [2011] 4 All ER: sole counsel for Independent Print Ltd media in the Stephen Neary Court of Protection case, successfully arguing for the media's right to report the story.

Independent News and Media v A [2010] EWCA Civ 482; [2010] 1 WLR 2262: junior counsel for Independent Newspapers Ltd in the Court of Appeal (sole counsel at first instance) in the first case concerning media access to the Court of Protection (the Derek Paravicini case).

X(A Child)(Residence and Contact: Rights of Media Attendance, Re [2009] EWHC 1728 (Fam); [2009] EMLR 26: junior counsel for the media in the first test case after the introduction of a new media right of access to attend Family Court proceedings.

Tradition Securities and Futures SA v Times Newspapers Ltd [2009] IRLR 354: sole counsel for the media in EAT case concerning a successful challenge to restricted reporting orders in sexual harassment claims brought by women traders in the city.

LM (A Child) (Reporting Restrictions): Coroner's Inquest, Re [2007] EWHC 1902 (Fam); [2008] 1 FLR 1360: sole counsel for Times Newspapers Ltd before the President of the Family Division in a sensitive case concerning media reporting of an inquest following a Family Court's ruling that a mother had killed her child.

Defamation

Kingsley v Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner [2013] EWHC 4410 (QB): acting as sole counsel for the OISC successfully obtaining summary judgment against a claimant in a libel claim.

Karim v Newsquest Media Group Ltd [2009] EWHC 3205 (QB): sole counsel for Newsquest Media Group Ltd in a libel case successfully striking out a claim on the basis that the hosting provisions in the Electronic Commerce Regulations applied to newspaper bulletin boards (the first such ruling of its kind).

Mardas v New York Times [2008] EWHC 3135 (QB): junior counsel for the New York Times in libel proceedings concerning the striking out of a claim on grounds of limited publication.

Roberts v Gable [2007] EWCA Civ 721; [2008] QB 502: junior counsel for Searchlight magazine before the Court of Appeal in the libel case that helped to develop the defence of neutral reportage.

Jameel v Wall Street Journal (Europe) [2006] UKHL 44; [2007] 1 AC 359: junior counsel for the Wall Street Journal before the House of Lords in a leading libel case that strengthened the Reynolds defence of responsible journalism on a matter of public interest.

Judicial Review

R(Nicklinson) v Ministry of Justice [2014] UKSC 38, [2014] 3 WLR 200: junior counsel for the Claimant before the Supreme Court in high profile judicial review proceedings concerning assisted suicide, Article 8 ECHR and the “right to die” of severely disabled persons.

R(Home Secretary) v Assistant Deputy Coroner for Inner West London [2010] EWHC 3098 (Admin); [2011] 1 WLR 2564: sole counsel for the media before the Divisional Court intervening on whether coroners have a common law power to hold closed hearings.

R(Harper) v Aldershot Magistrates Court [2010] EWHC 1319 (Admin): sole counsel for the Press Association in a judicial review successfully challenging the granting of anonymity to police officers being prosecuted for speeding offences.

R (Mohamed) v Foreign Secretary [2010] EWCA Civ 65; [2011] QB 218: junior counsel for the media in the Court of Appeal (sole counsel in the QBD) successfully persuading the court to release parts of a judgment concerning CIA torture which had been redacted on national security grounds.

R(British Telecommunications Plc and another) v Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills [2011] EWHC 1021 (Admin); [2011] 3 CMLR 5: sole counsel for consumer rights group Consumer Focus intervening in a judicial review challenging provisions of the Digital Economy Act 2010.

A v Security Service (Investigatory Powers Tribunal: Jurisdiction) [2009] UKSC 12; [2010] 2 AC 1: junior counsel for the claimant in judicial review proceedings concerning the memoirs of a former intelligence officer; the issue before the Supreme Court was whether the Investigatory Powers Tribunal had exclusive jurisdiction to hear human rights claims against the intelligence services.

Van Colle v Chief Constable of Hertfordshire [2008] UKHL 50; [2009] 1 AC 225: junior counsel for the Claimant in the test case which decided that the police do not owe a duty of care at common law or under Article 1 ECHR to take steps to prevent a foreseeable risk to the life of a victim of crime.

Comer House Research v Serious Fraud Office (2008) ACD 63: junior counsel for the media in the case that established the media’s and public’s right of access to statements of case in judicial review proceedings.

R(British Board of Film Classification) v Video Appeals Committee [2008] EWHC 3198 (Admin); (2008) 1 WLR 1658 (the Manhunt II case): junior counsel for Rockstar Games in judicial review proceedings concerning the application of the “harm” test under the Video Recordings Act.

Data Protection

Mosley v Google Inc [2015] EWHC 59 (QB), [2015] EMLR 11: junior counsel representing Google Inc in proceedings brought by Max Mosley concerning images made available on Google’s Search Engine.

Misuse of Private Information

Mobile Phone Voicemail Interception Litigation, Re [2012] EWHC 24; [2012] 1 AC 531: junior counsel for News Group Newspapers in the mobile phone voicemail interception litigation. This judgment concerned access to court documents.

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International Claims

Guerrero v Monterrico Metals [2009] EWHC 2475 (QB): junior counsel in private international law class action against a mining company brought on behalf of Peruvian farmers. This judgment concerned a freezing injunction successfully obtained against the company. The claims were eventually settled with substantial compensation.

Freedom of Information

Steven Mathieson v Information Commissioner EA/1010/1074, judgment of 18 June 2012: sole counsel for a Guardian journalist in the Information Rights Tribunal seeking access to information about the location of automatic number plate recognition cameras.

Contempt of Court

Florence Hartmann Case, Appeal Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, judgment of 19/7/12: intervening as amicus curiae for Article 19 in case concerning a former ICTY spokesperson convicted of contempt of court.

Haw v City of Westminster Magistrates Court [2007] EWHC 3198 (Admin); [2008] QB 888: sole counsel for Brian Haw before the Divisional Court following a summary conviction for contempt of court which established, contrary to previous case law, that there is a right of appeal in such cases to the Crown Court.

Election Cases

Fitch v Stephenson [2008] EWHC 501: sole counsel for the Labour Party in an election law case concerning whether a significant miscount of votes voids an election under the Representation of the Peoples Act.

Piling v Reynolds [2008] EWHC 316 (QB); [2009] 1 ALL ER 163: sole counsel for the Labour Party in an election law case where the election result turned on a whether a single vote was void for uncertainty.

PUBLICAITONS

Judicial Studies Board/Media Guidance "Reporting Restrictions in the Criminal Courts", 2015.

Robertson and Nichols, Media Law, 5th Edition, Penguin Books: principal author of chapter on Broadcasting Law.

EDUCATION

BA Hons (Oxon)

LLM International Human Rights Law (Distinction)

Queen Mother Scholar

Middle Temple (1998, 1999)

Guy is regulated by the Bar Standards Board and accepts instruction under Standard Contractual Terms. To find out more information on this and the way we work at Matrix, including our fee transparency statement, please see our [service standards](#).