

Harriet Di Francesco

Call: 2018

"Harriet is definitely a star of the future. Her drafting is extremely good and she gets to grips with difficult issues and provides great service."

Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2024



Clerk Details

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Practice Overview

Harriet's practice spans Chambers' core specialisms including construction, engineering, property (particularly in relation to the BSA 2022), professional negligence, PFI, and procurement. She is ranked by Chambers & Partners in construction and has been described by clients as *"extremely sharp, efficient and effective"* and *"utterly dedicated, extremely competent and always willing to assist"*.

Harriet is regularly instructed both as junior counsel and in her own right, and her broad experience includes instructions from both international and domestic clients. Harriet has developed a solid practice in litigation, adjudication and arbitration. She has acted for employers, contractors and subcontractors in complex construction, professional negligence and energy disputes. Recent experience includes: an ICC arbitration in which Italian law applied; acting for the developer in a series of adjudications and parallel TCC proceedings relating to unacceptable cladding on multiple buildings across the UK; and Part 8 proceedings in the High Court concerning questions of contractual interpretation and rectification. Harriet has experience with many major standard form contracts including JCT, NEC, FIDIC, RIBA, CECA and MF/1.

Harriet is a contributor to 'Keating on JCT Contracts' and the Construction Law Reports. Harriet regularly provides training and seminars on questions of procedural and substantive law for professional and lay clients.

Practice Areas

Advocacy

- Led – Harriet acted for Crest Nicholson in the second High Court case to grant a Building Liability Order under s.130 of the Building Safety Act 2022, including an anticipatory BLO and enforcement of a £14.9m adjudicator's award. Harriet was led by Jonathan Selby KC.
- Unled – appeared in her own right in a directions hearing in the TCC in relation to the hearing of an application for a building liability order under s.130 of the Building Safety Act 2022. She is being led in the wider proceedings by Jonathan Selby KC.
- Unled – sole counsel for the defendant in a claim about allegedly defective and delayed works to a sewer in which the defendant was granted permission to withdraw admissions and/or amend its defence.
- Unled – repeated appearances in County Court final hearings across the country as sole counsel for a major telecommunications provider in relation to damage to property caused by negligent users of the highway and statutory undertakers.
- Unled – CCMC in Birmingham County Court on behalf a defendant construction company specialising in multi-storey residential schemes. Harriet made successful applications in relation to striking out parts of the claimant's case and costs.
- Unled – final hearing in Preston County Court on behalf of the defendant main contractor in a dispute with the claimant subcontractor concerning the supply and installation of soundproof acoustic panels. The dispute concerned unpaid invoices and a counterclaim for defective work.
- Unled – sole counsel in a Directions Hearing and Early Neutral Evaluation at Winchester County Court. Harriet appeared on behalf of the respondents in respect of an appeal against a party wall award brought by the respondents' neighbour.
- Unled – Harriet successfully enforced an adjudicator's decision in the CLCC on behalf of a groundworks contractor. The defendant employer had resisted enforcement on the limited circumstances identified in *Hutton v Wilson* and sought a stay of execution.

Construction & Engineering

- Led – Harriet acted for Crest Nicholson in the second High Court case to grant a Building Liability Order under s.130 of the Building Safety Act 2022, including an anticipatory BLO and enforcement of a £14.9m adjudicator's award. Harriet was led by Jonathan Selby KC.

- Led – Harriet acted for the successful employer in a complex adjudication involving allegations of professional negligence in relation to the provision of railway engineering design services under an NEC3 Professional Services Contract with bespoke amendments. Harriet was led by Calum Lamont KC and James Thompson.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel for a developer in a multi-million-pound adjudication relating to fire safety defects under a JCT D&B contract for high and low-rise residential buildings in Scotland. There were parallel TCC proceedings between the same parties all of which were finally settled in favour of Harriet's client.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel for a local authority in a claim against a design and build contractor in relation to defects under an NEC3 Engineering and Construction Contract resulting in water ingress at a school.
- Led – Harriet acted for a large infrastructure company in relation to a complex multi-million-pound final account adjudication under an NEC4 subcontract involving upstream and downstream claims for extensions of time and loss and expense. Harriet was led by Rachael O'Hagan.
- Unled – Harriet acted for a construction company specialising in the design and construction of residential loft conversions and extensions in relation to a claim against a subcontractor under a bespoke contract. The claim concerned issues of delay, disruption, defects and termination.
- Led – Harriet acted as junior counsel in multi-million-pound TCC proceedings concerning allegations of professional negligence against architects in relation to the design and construction of a large mixed-use retail and residential project in the UK. Harriet was led by Vincent Moran KC and William Webb KC.
- Unled – Harriet acted for a sports and leisure company in relation to the defective design of a swimming pool under a collateral warranty.
- Led – Harriet acted for a joint venture in an adjudication and subsequent Part 8 proceedings concerning questions of contractual interpretation and rectification. Harriet was led by Tom Lazur.

International Arbitration

- Led – Harriet acted as junior counsel in an international arbitration under ICC rules concerning a solar farm in Africa. Harriet was led by Vincent Moran KC and Tom Coulson.
- Led – Harriet acted as junior counsel on behalf of an Italian contractor in relation to an ICC arbitration with an English subcontractor about a defective electric car battery. Harriet was led by external counsel.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel on behalf of a construction company in an ad hoc domestic arbitration concerning the value of final accounts under multiple contracts with a road works subcontractor.
- Led – Harriet acted a junior counsel in a DIFC-LCIA international arbitration concerning a shopping mall in Abu Dhabi in which UAE law applied. Harriet was led by Simon Hughes KC.
- Led – Harriet acted as junior counsel in an international arbitration concerning a coal-fired power station in South Africa. Harriet was led by David Thomas KC.

Procurement

- Led – Harriet acted as junior counsel in a claim concerning multiple challenges to the procurement of UK passenger rail franchises. Harriet was led by Fionnuala McCredie KC.
- Led – Harriet acted as junior counsel in a claim brought by a multinational rail transport company concerning the tender process for a rail services contract.

Property

- Led – Harriet acted for Crest Nicholson in the second High Court case to grant a Building Liability Order under s.130 of the Building Safety Act 2022, including an anticipatory BLO and enforcement of a £14.9m adjudicator’s award. Harriet was led by Jonathan Selby KC.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel in a claim involving 14 homeowners about a defective sewerage system serving their residential development.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel advising multiple homeowners about defective heating/cooling system in a new-build block of flats.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel for a private homeowner in relation to circa 100 defects associated with works carried out by a building contractor at her residential property. It included a claim under the Defective Premises Act 1972 and damages for distress and anxiety.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel advising homeowners in relation to a defective kitchen extension and central heating system. The claim involved failures to comply with applicable NHBC requirements.

Adjudication

- Led – Harriet acted for Crest Nicholson in the second High Court case to grant a Building Liability Order under s.130 of the Building Safety Act 2022, including an anticipatory BLO and enforcement of a £14.9m adjudicator’s award. Harriet was led by Jonathan Selby KC.
- Led – Harriet acted for the successful employer in a complex adjudication involving allegations of professional negligence in relation to railway engineering design services under an NEC3 Professional Services Contract with bespoke amendments. Harriet was led by Calum Lamont KC and James Thompson.
- Unled – Harriet acted as sole counsel for a developer in a multi-million-pound adjudication relating to fire safety defects under a JCT D&B contract for high and low-rise residential buildings in Scotland. There were parallel TCC proceedings between the same parties all of which were finally settled in favour of Harriet’s client.
- Unled – Harriet has successfully acted in multiple high value “smash and grab” (or payment notice) adjudications for both referring and responding parties.
- Led – Harriet acted for a large infrastructure company in relation to a complex multi-million-pound final account adjudication under an NEC4 subcontract involving upstream and downstream claims for extensions of time and loss and expense.

- Unled – Harriet successfully acted on behalf of a groundworks subcontractor in relation to a payment notice dispute under a CECA form of subcontract with its employer. The claim concerned the employer’s failure to serve a payment notice or pay less notice and its wrongful retention of sums due under the subcontract. Harriet later appeared in the CCLC where she successfully enforced the adjudicator’s decision.
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Reported Cases

- Standard Life Assurance Limited v Gleeds [2021] EWHC 2081 (TCC)
 - 2019 Rail Franchising Litigation [2020] EWHC 1568 (TCC)
 - Crest Nicholson v Ardmore [2026] EWHC 789 (TCC)
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Other information

Education & Professional Career

Professional Career

- Barrister, Keating Chambers, 2019
- Pupil, Keating Chambers, 2018-2019

Education

- City University, BPTC, 2016-2017
- BPP Law School, GDL, 2015
- Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Bologna, Italy and Washington DC – MA International Relations, 2011-2013
- University of Sheffield – BA History, 2008-2011

Additional Information

Harriet is a qualified PADI Divemaster. She enjoys hiking, cycling and running. She is learning to speak Portuguese.

Appointments & Awards

- Worshipful Company of Arbitrators (WCA) Arbitration Competition (Best Individual Advocate), 2019

- Middle Temple (Lord Diplock Scholar), 2016
- City University (BPTC Full Fee Scholarship), 2016
- BPP Law School (Director of GDL Programmes' Scholarship), 2015
- Elected to Phi Beta Kappa honour society, Johns Hopkins Chapter, 2013
- Johns Hopkins SAIS (Robert E Osgood Memorial Fellowship), 2012
- Sheffield University (Student Graduate Award), 2011

Recommendations

"Harriet is particularly clear and effective at identifying the fundamental issue and ensuring client's understand what they need to do in order to substantiate their claim."

Construction, Legal 500 UK Bar 2026

"Harriet is completely on top of the detail, prompt and practical at advising and realistic in her assessment of prospects."

Construction, Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2026

"Harriet was a consummate professional, delivering an excellent standard of drafted pleadings and helpful input on strategy to progress the matter."

Construction, Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2026

"She did some great submissions. I would definitely consider using her again in the future."

Construction, Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2026

"Harriet is very good, organised and very good on the detail."

Construction, Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2025

"Harriet has very great attention to detail and excellent calibre in the construction area."

Construction, Legal 500 UK Bar 2025

"Harriet is very bright, personable, and confident. She gets to grips with complicated issues quickly and leads you through the process with reassuring ease."

Construction, Legal 500 UK Bar 2024

"Harriet is definitely a star of the future. Her drafting is extremely good and she gets to grips with difficult issues and provides great service."

Construction, Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2024

"Harriet is very thorough and insightful. She picks up on the little details and predicts problem areas to be resolved before they arise."

Construction, Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2024

"Harriet is very approachable and provides timely and constructive advice."

Construction, Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2024

"Harriet is extremely capable, effective and very easy to work with. She also delivers very good written product and has a great legal mind."

Construction, Chambers & Partners 2023

"Harriet is utterly dedicated, extremely competent and always willing to assist."

Construction, Chambers & Partners 2023

"Harriet is knowledgeable of procedure and thorough at drafting, and she's a confident advocate."

Construction, Chambers & Partners 2023

"She is extremely sharp, efficient and effective."

Construction, Chambers & Partners 2023
