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# Law

## Lawyer of the week: Jason Coppel, QC



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Linda Tsang

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Jason Coppel, QC, of 11KBW Chambers, acted for the law firms in the judicial review and civil claims that led the lord chancellor, Michael Gove, to abandon two-tier criminal legal aid contracting.

### What were the main challenges and possible implications?

We were attacking the outcome of the largest tender process ever run by government, after two previous judicial reviews that had tried to stop it from happening. We had more than 80 different clients, with differing interests and — worse — all of them lawyers. To pressure the lord chancellor into abandoning the two-tier policy without a trial was extraordinary. The result, I hope, will be to secure a viable criminal legal aid service and to encourage government to put more resources into managing important tenders.

**What was your worst day as a lawyer?**

I hate losing and any defeat is a very bad day. My worst was in the privy council where my leader — unexpectedly — conceded defeat early in his speech and I decided to follow him with submissions as to why he was wrong. We lost anyway.

**What was your most memorable experience as a lawyer?**

Sipping home-distilled blackcurrant vodka at Farm Terrace Allotments, Watford, during a party that the allotment-holders threw for their lawyers after we won a judicial review to stop the sale of their plots for housing. It was a pleasure to be invited to eat and drink the fruits of our labours.

**Who has been the most influential person in your life?**

My father Edwin, who taught me, in his modest and unassuming way, the importance of working hard, putting your family first and never taking anything, especially yourself, too seriously. Professionally, it's Patrick, now lord justice, Elias, the most compelling advocate I have seen, who tried to teach me the essence of the job: keep it simple, look the judge in the eye and persuade, persuade, persuade.

**Why did you become a lawyer?**

Sadly, because I found law intellectually very interesting.

**What would your career advice be?**

Have you thought about your work-life balance? If you succeed, law can be fantastically interesting and rewarding, but it's bloody hard work.

**If you had not become a lawyer, what would you have chosen to be?**

Northern football correspondent at a national newspaper. Going to watch a top game, jotting down a few thoughts on the train home. That would do nicely, I thought.

**Where do you see yourself in ten years?**

I hope to have learnt to sail my dinghy without endangering the safety of myself, my crew and passing vessels. Ten years is realistic.

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Jason Coppel

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