





Rachael Bicknell | Mediator

"Rachael was brilliant. She managed a very heated dispute with skill and precision" Chambers & Partners, 2025

"prepares assiduously...spares no effort in trying to secure an agreement" Legal 500, 2025

"tenacious in ensuring that parties carefully consider and face up to the risks that they face in litigation" Legal 500, 2024

Over the last 5 years Rachael has built a thriving mediation practice. She is ranked in Chambers and Partners (2025) as one of the top 50 commercial mediators in the UK, and the only mediator in Scotland, and as a Leading UK Mediator in Legal 500 (2025). She has mediated over 100 commercial and civil disputes across the UK ranging in value from tens of thousands to multimillion pound claims and with up to 6 separately represented parties and 40 participants.

Rachael consistently receives excellent client feedback and has been described as "hugely skilful", "impressive", "incredible", "the best mediator I've come across in a long time" and "my first choice of mediator". She is renowned for her calm, assured and personable manner, her thorough preparation, and her ability to grasp complex technical issues and to quickly understand multiple issues and competing interests. Rachael is also praised for her tenacity and resilience in helping the parties to come to a resolution, even when they remain some considerable distance apart.

Rachael is the founder of Squaring Circles, winner of a UK National Mediation Award in 2020. She brings to her mediation practice over 12 years' experience as a solicitor at two of the UK's most successful premium law firms, where she specialised in the resolution of commercial, professional negligence, insolvency, real estate, corporate and shareholder disputes.

Reflecting her former practice, Rachael is routinely appointed in a broad range of commercial and civil disputes. She has a strong reputation in commercial, professional negligence, construction, real estate, insolvency, company, business interruption, partnership, boardroom, family business related claims and inheritance and executry disputes. She is on the mediation panels for the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb), the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Scottish Land Commission. She handles disputes involving corporates, insurers, private, public and third sector clients and has mediated disputes with parties from the UK, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, the USA, Canada and Australia.

Rachael is a Distinguished Fellow of the International Academy of Mediators (IAM), an invitation-only organisation of the world's pre-eminent commercial mediators. She is also certified by the International Mediation Institute (IMI) and the Singapore International Mediation Institute (SIMI) and a registered civil and commercial mediator with the Civil Mediation Council (CMC) and Scottish Mediation. She trained in negotiation and mediation at Harvard Law School and the Strauss Institute at the Pepperdine Caruso School of Law respectively. She is a Fellow of ADR ODR International and on the mediation panels for the Korean Commercial Arbitration Board (KCAB) in Seoul and the ADGM Arbitration Centre in Abu Dhabi.

Rachael is a member of the training faculty on the RICS Mediation Training Programme and until 2023 taught negotiation skills on the Online LLM in Dispute Resolution at the University of Aberdeen, a UK top-10 law school.

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Mediation style and approach

Rachael mediates a broad range of disputes from those where the parties are commercially driven to those which have a strong emotional impact. She embraces the flexibility of mediation and adapts her style, and approach to process design, to the needs of the parties and the dispute. She is empathetic, engaging, inquisitive and tenacious without shying away from legal and commercial challenge when needed, nor compromising on the excellent rapport she builds with parties and legal counsel. She works hard to broker commercial settlements and to engage the parties in creative problem solving.

Rachael's unique approach to mediation reflects her belief that it is a process rather than a one-day event. To demonstrate her commitment to the parties and the process she guarantees not to accept mediation appointments for different disputes on consecutive days. She is invested in the process from the outset. Once appointed she has a Teams meeting with the solicitors to discuss process design and logistics. She conducts a pre-mediation-day Teams call with each party, both clients and solicitors. She is always thoroughly prepared and takes a proactive approach to ensuring the parties are fully prepared for settlement, which contributes to the high settlement rates in the mediations she is appointed to. Her approach offers the parties a positive and effective mediation experience and keeps them focussed on trying to achieve a resolution. Feedback from solicitors and parties always praises her approach.

Practice areas

Agriculture and rural business Boardroom, organisation and workplace Commercial and business Company, director and shareholder Construction, energy and infrastructure **Employment** Family business **Financial Services** Inheritance and executry Insolvency Landlord and tenant Real estate, land and telecoms Partnership Private client Professional services Professional negligence Sale of goods and services

Career history

2019 – present: Founder and Senior Mediator, Squaring Circles

2014 - 2019: Associate to Managing Associate, Addleshaw Goddard

2005 – 2014: Trainee Solicitor, Solicitor, Senior Solicitor and Associate, Burness Paull

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Certifications, training and education

Distinguished Fellow of the International Academy of Mediators (IAM)

International Mediation Institute (IMI) Certified Mediator

Singapore International Mediation Institute (SIMI) Certified Mediator

Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (MCIArb)

Civil Mediation Council Registered Mediator

Scottish Mediation Registered Mediator

Law Society of Scotland Accredited Mediator

RICS Accredited Mediator: 2021

Mediating the Litigated Case at Pepperdine Caruso School of Law: 2021

Accredited civil and commercial mediator with ADR ODR International: 2020

CEDR Accredited Negotiator: 2020

Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School: 2019

Accredited Mediator with Core Solutions: 2015

Admitted as a solicitor, the Law Society of Scotland, October 2007 - October 2024

University of Edinburgh Diploma in Legal Practice: 2005 University of Edinburgh Bachelor of Law (Hons) 2:1: 2003

Professional memberships

International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation (IWIRC) Professional Negligence Lawyers Association (PNLA) Women in Litigation (Scotland)

Directories

Chambers & Partners, 2025

Rachael was brilliant. She managed a very heated dispute with skill and precision.

Rachael is a real pleasure to deal with, providing commercial and effective mediation support. She empathises with clients and gets the balance right between challenging parties and remaining neutral.

She is a very passionate mediator who seeks to achieve an agreeable outcome for all involved. With her background in commercial litigation, she understands both the legal and business issues.

Legal 500, 2025

Rachael prepares assiduously and spares no effort in trying to secure an agreement and is able to keep parties on board, even when emotions are running high.

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Chambers & Partners, 2024

Extremely pragmatic, clever and open to adapting to situations.

Rachael has an understated style where she listens to what the parties want. She's very adaptable in mediations and takes the time in advance to talk to the clients so when you start you've already covered some ground.

Sensible, calm and looks to get a great result.

Rachael is very pleasant to deal with and develops a good grasp of the issues without losing herself in the details.

Legal 500, 2024

Personable but direct. She is tenacious in ensuring that parties carefully consider and face up to the risks that they face in litigation and does not let them off the hook when it comes to answering difficult questions.

Legal 500, 2023

Well prepared, organised, conciliatory and has excellent communication skills – all traits of a very effective mediator.

Client testimonials

Partner, National Law Firm

Rachael is a "go to" mediator for commercial disputes. She's meticulously well prepared and it shows. Her approach is one of the most productive I've encountered.

Counsel, international law firm

Rachael is a highly effective mediator with exemplary communication skills. The thorough preparation that she not only personally undertakes but also tasks to the parties, ensures the mediation day is efficient and effective. She is exceptionally smart and quickly grasps the key issues. She does not shy away from engaging in and testing parties' views on the facts, the law and the risks they face in litigation.

Senior lawyer, international law firm

Rachael is a very skilful mediator. She has exceptional organisational skills, thoroughly prepares, and has a calm and personable demeanour. Her deft handling of the mediation, involving a mixture of private individuals, contractors and construction professionals, demonstrated her ability to quickly understand multiple issues and competing interests and mediate complex multiparty disputes.

Partner, national law firm

Rachael's mediation style is refreshing. She takes great care to understand the case, the parties and their drivers in advance of the mediation day and this undoubtedly makes the day more focussed and directed towards getting a settlement. She is adept at winning the parties' trust and getting them to concentrate on the nub of the issues in hand.

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Partner, national law firm

Rachael is the best mediator I've come across in a long time.

Associate Director, corporate client

Rachael is very well prepared and quickly understands the law and the issues in dispute. She is proactive in helping the parties to acknowledge and quantify the risks of not reaching a settlement and works hard to help the parties reach a resolution as quickly as possible.

Partner, national law firm

Rachael swiftly identifies the issues and is robust in her testing of the parties' positions whilst always being respectful. She played a critical role in the parties reaching a financial settlement of the claim, which also improved their ongoing relationship.

Partner, national law firm

We are grateful to you for all your hard work, skill and judgement in conducting this mediation, which was instrumental in securing a successful outcome to this long-running dispute. Your input has been very much appreciated by both us and our client.

Partner, national law firm

Rachael went above and beyond. She has a calm head and diffused tension in what was an emotional situation for both parties. She took time to understand the parties' emotions and objectives in advance and was hands-on in giving helpful pre-mediation work and advice on how the parties could make the most of the day. All of which was fundamental to the parties reaching a settlement.

Junior Counsel, London Chambers

Thank you for your excellent work, time and dedication. I had not believed that an outcome like this was possible. I will certainly recommend you.

Partner, regional law firm

Rachael has a strong commercial background so quickly understands the law, the facts and any client management issues. She comes across to clients and solicitors as impartial, authoritative, and pro-active. She is my first choice of mediator.

Partner, national law firm

Rachael is impressive, and in difficult cases. She prepares extensively and works very hard to ensure all parties prepare for the mediation, which ultimately pays dividends on the mediation day. I would not hesitate to recommend her as a mediator.

Partner, national law firm

Rachael very quickly grasps complex technical points and shows tenacity in helping the parties to come to a resolution.

Partner, regional law firm

Rachael is an impressive mediator. She is excellent at establishing rapport and has considerable skill in getting the measure of all the personalities in play and steering the mediation to best effect.

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Partner, national law firm

Rachael is well prepared, calm, assured and has a pleasant manner. She is resilient and doesn't give up helping the parties to reach a deal even when they remain some considerable distance apart.

Partner, national law firm

Rachael grasps issues quickly and is excellent at building rapport. She is just what you want in a serious commercial mediator.

Partner, national law firm

Rachael, you were fantastic. Your careful preparation was also much appreciated and did not go unnoticed. I will definitely recommend using you in future.

Director, national law firm

I have worked with a number of mediators and there are few who can build rapport and get to the heart of the dispute as quickly as Rachael. She has an excellent manner and her approach to preparing the parties ensures the mediation day is as efficient as possible.

Senior Lawyer, City law firm

Thank you again for yesterday. [The client] is very happy with the result and very glad it is all over. I also very much appreciated your skill and patience. I hope we get the chance to work together in the future.

Senior Associate, national law firm

Rachael is very quick to grasp complex legal and factual issues and is very pragmatic in her approach. She is an excellent mediator.

Senior Associate, national law firm

Rachael is pragmatic, communicates effectively and creates an atmosphere conducive to the parties finding a resolution. She is excellent at building rapport and controlling the process. I rank her highly amongst the other mediators with whom I have experience of working.

Consultant, City law firm

Rachael brings a calming presence and is very good in tense situations.

Associate, international law firm

Rachael is very effective in helping the parties tackle tricky legal issues while never losing track of the commercial realities. She quickly hones in on what really matters to each side.

Party to a mediation

Thank you for the work and time you put into the mediation. We found the experience less intimidating than we imagined and we are grateful for the way you managed to keep everything on an even keel, kept attention focussed on the essential issues and maintained the positive and constructive mood.

Party to a mediation

Rachael's professionalism, teamed with obvious empathy, patience and great skill was impressive.

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Party to a mediation

We were so impressed with your professionalism, efficiency, patience and commitment to stick with us all, until an agreement could be made. There is no doubt that without you, we would not have reached an agreement, and we are truly grateful to you for this.

Party to a mediation

Rachael, I was so impressed by you at the mediation today. Everyone completely trusted you and you did it all with such brilliant care and thought. Your hard work was completely invaluable, and you demonstrated that you are hugely skilful.

Recent case examples

Professional negligence and liability

- > £8 million professional negligence claim against a firm of solicitors in respect of alleged negligent advice relating to a personal injury claim by two claimants. The dispute involved a very complex factual matrix, disputed matters of law including complex prescription (time bar) and limitation arguments, liability, causation and quantum, and multiple competing expert reports.
- c.£2 million professional negligence claim by a national infrastructure company against a firm of solicitors, arising from a series of conveyancing transactions. The dispute involved a complex factual matrix and disputed matters of law including liability, scope of duty, causation, loss of chance, prescription (time bar) and quantum.
- c.£1.5 million professional liability and breach of contract claim in respect of an allegedly defective vessel traffic services and radar system. The dispute involved a complex factual matrix and disputed matters of law including liability, causation, quantum, jurisdiction and governing law.
- c.£900,000 professional negligence claim by an estate owner against a firm of solicitors relating to an agricultural tenancy. The dispute involved a very complex factual matrix and complex disputed matters of law including causation, loss of chance and quantum.
- c.£600,000 professional negligence claim against a firm of architects arising from a c.£2 million mixed use redevelopment project. The dispute involved a complex and disputed factual matrix and disputed matters of law including liability, scope of duty, causation and quantum.
- c.£400,000 breach of contract / professional negligence claim arising from architectural services provided to the main contractor under a JCT Design and Build contract in relation to the design and subdivision of a retail store. The dispute was in respect of the design of an umbrella detail to prevent the internal spread of fire.
- £250,000 professional negligence claim against a firm of solicitors in respect of alleged negligent advice relating to the recoverability of sums due under numerous loan agreements. The dispute involved complex disputed matters of fact and law including liability, causation, prescription (time bar) and quantum.
- c.£200,000 professional services dispute arising from a project to develop a large-scale forestry scheme.

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 $\label{eq:philosophical} PHILOSOPHICAL\ MEANING-to\ see\ equally\ in\ four\ directions-up,\ down,\ in\ and\ out\\ METAPHORICAL\ MEANING-attempting\ anything\ that\ seems\ impossible$





Construction, energy and infrastructure

A complex multiparty £2.5 million commercial construction dispute between the employer, main-contractor, engineering consultants and sub-contractor and multiple owners of a neighbouring property damaged during the construction of an adjacent building. The dispute involved a very complex factual matrix and disputed matters of fact and law including liability, scope of duty, causation and quantum. The mediation involved 6 separately represented parties and 40 participants.

- c.£1.4 million claim in respect of the construction of a drainage system servicing a large residential development forming part of a multi-million-pound mixed use redevelopment.
- c.£950,000 dispute in respect of the design and construction of a flood alleviation scheme. The dispute involved disputed matters of law including liability, causation and quantum.
- c.£500,000 breach of contract dispute in respect of a Utilities Agreement between a landlord and tenant of industrial premises.
- £450,000 breach of contract dispute between a main contractor and sub-contractor in respect of allegedly defective offshore oil and gas works in the Black Sea.
- c.£400,000 breach of contract and negligence claim against a firm of architects in respect of the design of an umbrella detail in commercial premises.
- c.£250,000 dispute under a design and build contract in respect of a defective farm building.
- c.£200,000 breach of contract and payment dispute between the main contractor and an electrical engineering subcontractor in respect of the entitlement to charge a back charge and allegedly defective works in an energy from waste installation project.
- £200,000 domestic construction dispute between a property developer and homeowner relating to the construction of a new property. Claim for unlawful retention of funds and additional works and counterclaim for professional negligence. The dispute involved numerous competing expert reports, disputed liability, causation and quantum.

Company, director and shareholder

- c.£1.5 million dispute in respect of the remuneration to be paid to a former director for professional services provided to three companies operating in Scotland and offshore. Highly emotional dispute with counter allegations including breach of fiduciary duties and non-performance issues.
- c.£1.4 million claim for breach of warranty and misappropriation of funds between the purchaser and seller of a limited company operating in the food and drink sector.
- c.£400,000 breach of contract and restrictive covenant dispute between a former founding director and a manufacturing company operating in the construction industry.

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c.£400,000 dispute between a former director and a manufacturing company involving allegations of fraud, fraudulent misrepresentation and breach of fiduciary duties.

c.£400,000 family business dispute between four family members relating to their interests in a limited company which operated a hotel. The dispute involved a complex factual matrix and allegations including diverting company money and acting in breach of fiduciary duties and for disputed financial transactions exercised under a power of attorney in respect of a fifth family member.

A six-figure multi-party director shareholder dispute arising from a failed joint venture. Claims included alleged breaches of fiduciary duties, a shareholders' agreement and non-disclosure agreements, dishonest assistance and unlawful use of confidential information.

c.£365,000 highly contentious tri-party breach of contract and restrictive covenant dispute between two competing employment agencies and a senior employee who had worked for both companies on several occasions.

Acrimonious and highly emotional dispute between an international marketing agency and a former senior employee in respect of alleged contractual breaches of restraint of trade and the theft of proprietary information, and a counterclaim for damages for psychological harm. The dispute involved dispute matters of fact including the interpretation of medical evidence and disputed matters of law including liability, causation and quantum.

Insolvency

£1.2 million claim by an insolvency practitioner against a former director of an insolvent company pertaining to numerous alleged breaches of fiduciary duties including false accounting entries and a "sham" sale of the shares in the company to convert a significant debit balance on the director's loan account into a credit sum due to the director.

c.£700,000 claim by an insolvency practitioner against former directors of an insolvent company in relation to alleged unlawful dividend payments and other unexplained transactions.

c.£300,000 claim by an insolvency practitioner against a former director of an insolvent company pertaining to alleged disposal of assets at undervalue, unexplained payments to the director and associated persons in preference to the general body of creditors and fraudulently claiming a bounce bank loan.

c.£145,000 claim by an insolvency practitioner against a former director of an insolvent company for repayment of director's loan and alleged unexplained transactions.

c.£100,000 claim by the liquidator of a farming business against a firm of solicitors in respect of alleged negligent advice relating to a conveyancing transaction.

Real Estate

> £5 million loss of profits claim arising from an alleged breach of missives for a property development site. The dispute involved a complex factual matrix and disputed matters of law including liability, causation, loss of chance, prescription (time bar) and quantum.

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> £2 million dilapidations and loss of rent claim in respect of leased commercial premises in Scotland.

Pre-litigation landlord and tenant dispute in respect of alleged breaches of a lease of industrial premises, including a multimillion-pound damages claim.

c.£300,000 dispute between two family members in respect of an action for division and sale.

Telecoms

c.£3 million telecoms dispute between a large mobile network operator and site provider in respect of the application of the new Electronic Communication Code to the site provider's redevelopment plans and the MNO's paragraph 33 notice.

Family business related claims

- > £12 million dispute relating to wind farm companies and a farming partnership involving complex issues of partnership and inheritance law and numerous competing expert reports.
- c.£4 million multi-party farming partnership dispute.
- c.£4 million multi-party family business dispute between two sides of a family involving a very complex factual matrix involving trading companies, a partnership and the ownership of numerous commercial and residential property interests.
- c.£800,000 breach of trust and shareholder dispute between a father and daughter who had founded a property development company.

A 10-day "project" mediation of a seven-figure partnership dispute between four family members of a farming business, requiring significant process design.

Private client and inheritance and executry

Inheritance dispute between five family members of the deceased an estate worth c.£5 million. The dispute involved jurisdictional issues as the deceased was domiciled in Europe, the validity of transfers of assets by the deceased prior to his death, allegations of undue influence and coercion, and assets in the UK and Europe.

An inheritance dispute between three siblings who were the executors and beneficiaries of a partnership business operating within the hospitality sector with assets exceeding £4 million.

A 2-day and c.£1 million dispute between family members following the death of their father involving a farming partnership, heritable property interests and farm assets.

A highly emotional £400,000 inheritance dispute between the deceased's children and former partner in relation to two disputed wills and the transfer of a property involving allegations of undue influence and facility and circumvention.

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An access dispute between a farming partnership and the neighbouring farm owner in respect of the cost of maintaining and repairing an access road and related repairs over which the neighbouring farm owner had a servitude right of access.

c.£250,000 dispute in respect of proprietary estoppel, constructive trust and resulting trust claims and counterclaims.

Employment

c.£550,000 dispute between a public sector employer and former senior employee for fraud and breach of contract.

c.£165,000 employment claim including breach of contract, redundancy payments, underpayment of notice pay and holiday pay, historical claims for underpayment of holiday pay and non-payment of annual leave accrual.

Boardroom, organisational and workplace

A five-party mediation between the founding partners and MBO team of a consultancy business resulting in the negotiation of an exit package for one of the MBO team.

A 3-day mediation between the board and the CEO of a high profile third sector organisation.

A highly emotional tri-party organisational conflict following cross complaints between the parties, who were elected members of the prestigious organisation. Allegations included sex and disability discrimination and numerous breaches of the organisation's code of conduct.

A 4-day mediation of a six-party boardroom and employment dispute requiring significant process design. Highly contentious dispute with various strands of conflict at board level and between one board member and an employee.

A workplace dispute between two senior executives in a North African branch of a global manufacturing business.

A highly emotional workplace dispute between two senior managers of an international construction and infrastructure company involving allegations of harassment and sexual harassment.

A highly emotional workplace dispute between an employee and their line manager following the conclusion of both a disciplinary process against the employee and thereafter a grievance process against the line manager.

Intellectual property and technology

A five-figure breach of contract dispute between a rural landowner and a software company in respect of an allegedly defective customer relationship management system.

A highly contentious five-figure breach of contract and intellectual property dispute, including breach of copyright and breach of moral rights, between a freelance graphic designer and a start-up company which had created and designed a new product.