

Matthew Curtis

Year of Call: 2006

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Overview

Matthew Curtis is a specialist employment barrister. He has been recognised as a Leading Junior in the Legal 500 since 2016, and in Chambers & Partners since 2021. He has been described as “phenomenal counsel” whose “advocacy is superb”. Clients see him as “one of our leading juniors when it comes to employment matters”.

Matthew regularly appears in the Employment Tribunal and EAT on behalf of both employers and employees in a range of employment issues and has dealt with a number of complex multi-day cases, including:

- Acting for former Head of specialist arts school in a case listed for a 20-day final hearing, involving seventeen respondents. The case attracted press interest and involved external reviews by law firms and barristers.
- Acting for multi-national company headquartered abroad in a claim of nationality discrimination brought by an expatriate employee
- Acting for a police force, defending disability-discrimination claims in a case involving arguments about whether the Claimant has capacity.
- A TUPE case which was listed for a 10-day remedy hearing and involved 14 claimants and 8 respondents. Matthew represented a local authority.

Matthew is instructed by numerous large national retailers, transport companies, airline industry providers and a multitude of SME’s as well as several local authorities across the Western Circuit.

He is able to accept instructions in County Court and High Court proceedings, having a background in civil litigation alongside his extensive tribunal experience.

Recommendations

Matthew Curtis is a barrister with a wealth of experience handling discrimination claims. He undertakes work on behalf of respondents arising from a variety of sectors, including from the fields of healthcare, retail and technology.

Strengths: "Matthew's advocacy is superb. I would not hesitate to instruct him or recommend him." "Matthew is an extremely strong and effective advocate, remaining calm while dealing with complex matters. "Matthew Curtis is one of our leading juniors when it comes to employment matters."

Chambers UK 2025/Employment/Western Bar

Strengths: "He is stellar. Matthew is incredibly commercial and a safe pair of hands. He knows how to ease concerns and gives robust advice when needed."

"He is unbelievably strong with clients; he is also approachable and is never patronising"

"Matthew is very well respected and is doing work beyond his call."

Chambers UK 2024/Employment/Western Bar

Strengths: "He is particularly good at understanding complex and regulated working environments."

"He has a quietly persuasive style of advocacy and makes things easily intelligible for lay clients."

Chambers UK 2023/Employment/Western Bar

Strengths: "He is a great advocate who was able to handle a difficult self-representing claimant." "He is a competent and courteous opponent."

Recent work: Acted for John Lewis, defending claims of disability discrimination and unfair dismissal.

Chambers UK 2022/Employment/Western Bar

Strengths: "He is well liked by clients, technically excellent and a great advocate."

Recent work: Represented Kingston University Service Company in a six-day whistle-blowing, age discrimination, sex discrimination, unfair dismissal and TUPE claim. The claimant was an HR director working for the university.

Chambers UK 2021/Employment/Western Bar

Matthew Curtis – 3PB 'Matthew is a phenomenal counsel. He is an entirely safe pair of hands, and his technical knowledge is brilliant. He is thorough and gives considered thought to strategy on each case.'

Legal 500 2025/Employment/Leading Junior/Western Circuit

Matthew Curtis – 3PB 'His cross examination is pointed but not combative – a silent assassin in his advocacy.'

Legal 500 2025/Employment/Leading Junior/London Bar

Matthew Curtis is 'fantastic with witnesses' and specialises in whistleblowing cases in regulated sectors – recently he appeared for the respondent in *Biggs v A Bilbrough & Co & others*, a widely publicised sex discrimination and whistleblowing case brought by a solicitor employed in a shipping firm.

'Matthew is the complete all-round package. His technical expertise is excellent and he is incredibly knowledgeable and gets to grips with even the most complex of cases incredibly swiftly. He is also a skillful advocate, easily able to articulate complex arguments.'

Legal 500 2024/Employment/Leading Junior/Western Circuit

'Matthew is an extremely persuasive advocate with a calm style which employment judges like. He is incisive without the need for gratuitously aggressive tactics.'

Legal 500 2023/Employment/Leading Junior/Western Circuit

'His persuasive advocacy style is highly regarded, and his excellent interpersonal skills that puts parties and witnesses at ease.'

Legal 500 2022/Employment/Leading Junior/Western Circuit

'As an advocate, he is a calm, deliberate and extremely effective persuader.'

Legal 500 2021/Employment/Western Circuit

'Well-liked by clients for his clear and concise advice.'

Legal 500 2020/Employment/Western Circuit

'Very experienced in discrimination cases.'

Legal 500 2018/19/Employment/Western Circuit

'Very personable, articulate and thorough.'

Legal 500 2017/Employment/Western Circuit

Matthew Curtis - "A calm and effective advocate, who shows thorough preparation and meticulous attention to detail."

Legal 500 2016/Employment/Western Circuit

Matthew Curtis - "He comes across confidently when delivering a case to tribunal."

Legal 500 2015/Employment/Western Circuit

Matthew Curtis - "A very competent barrister, with excellent commercial and communication skills."

Legal 500 2014/Employment/Western Circuit

Matthew Curtis - "Recognised as a rising star who punches well above his height."

Legal 500 2013/Employment/Western Circuit

Client Testimonials

"I just wanted to reach out to you following the conclusion of [our] case. In fact, prior to receiving judgement I'd already decided I would contact your chambers, feeling compelled to write a few words of gratitude toward Matthew Curtis. The manner in which he handled our case, such professionalism, efficiency and good nature, was second to none. Should the company again find itself in an employment issue requiring representation, I'll be calling 3PB. Great job!"

Employment client

"Can I take this opportunity to thank you for instructing Matthew to represent me in the tribunal, he was absolutely brilliant in everything he did."

Employment client

"Thank you so much for representing us on Thursday. We couldn't have had a better barrister! You were so organised [and] articulate and managed to get a grasp extremely quickly on a very unusual case resulting in winning. This is more outstanding due to the huge file that you had to go through in such a short time. We were very impressed with your confident presentation to the judge whom I think rather enjoyed listening to your argument. Thank you once again and we wish you success in your future cases. I would say good luck but with all the hard work you do I don't think you will need it." [Civil case]

Academic qualifications

- Middle Temple
- King's College, London - LLB (Hons)
- Inns of Court School Law - BVC

Professional qualifications & appointments

- CIPD conduct hearing panel member (2017-2022)
- Fee -paid Employment Judge: 2021 onwards

- Deputy District Judge: 2024 onwards

Professional bodies

- Employment Law Bar Association
- Employment Lawyers Association

Expertise

Employment and discrimination

Matthew has an extensive Employment Law practice regularly advising and representing both Claimants and Respondents. He has been recognised as an employment barrister, noted as a Leading Junior in the Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners for a number of years, described as *"a rising star who punches well above his weight"*, an accolade which is demonstrated with his work on numerous complex multi-day cases across London and the Western Circuit.

Matthew has appeared in Employment Tribunals on behalf of both employer and employee in unfair dismissal, TUPE, redundancy, disability discrimination, age discrimination, race discrimination and whistle-blowing cases.

Matthew is particularly adept at getting to grips with the details in technically complex cases, demonstrated by a number of cases he has undertaken for airports and flight schools requiring detailed understanding of Aviation law, and also for regulated professions such as care homes and schools requiring an understanding of the CQC/Ofsted requirements. His recommendation in the Legal 500 notes that "his technical knowledge is brilliant" (2025).

Matthew is frequently asked to advise on all aspects of an employment law dispute, from drafting merits and pleadings to appropriate quantum and terms of settlement. He is instructed by large national corporations and solicitors from across the country as well as individual claimants who require a dedicated, competent and technically able Barrister.

Recent Cases include

Morton v Eastleigh CAB [2020] EWCA Civ 638 (Court of Appeal)

Acted in appeal consider the standards for adjournments in ET proceedings, balancing the efficient conduct of proceedings with the right to a fair trial in the context of a disabled Claimant.

Wray v Jewish Care UKEAT/0193/18 (EAT)

Acted for Respondent resisting the Claimant's appeal. C had failed to present his claim in time due to the fees regime; he argued that the fees meant it was "not reasonably practicable" to present his claim and sought an extension of time. The ET rejected C's arguments and struck out the claims due to lack of jurisdiction. The EAT upheld the ET decision. Matthew appeared for the Respondent at the ET and EAT.

Harling v Eastbourne Borough Council UKEAT/0185/17 (EAT)

Represented the Respondent/Appellant at the EAT following a 5-day ET claim involving allegations of disability discrimination and unfair dismissal.

S v A Law Firm (2022)

After the collapse of a large criminal law firm, a number of the former employees (including solicitors and legal executives) began work for another law firm. They claimed that their employment had transferred across pursuant to TUPE. Matthew represented the purported transferee law firm.

Z v A multi-national company (2025, ongoing)

Acting for a multi-national company headquartered abroad, defending a claim by a former employee of the Head Office who carried out work in the UK. Claim involves allegations of race discrimination and arguments around jurisdiction.

Articles

Matthew Curtis reviews the case of *Gourlay v West Dunbartonshire Council* [2025] EAT 29, in which the EAT reminds practitioners that the harm that would have been caused by a hypothetical lawful dismissal has to be the same as that caused by an unfair dismissal for compensation to be reduced.

The case also outlines the need for expert evidence when arguing that ill health retirement would have occurred in any event.

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[Matthew Curtis](#) reviews *Cygnit Behavioural Health Ltd v Britton* [2022] EAT 18, a case in which the EAT focused on what the claimant had been able to do during the limitation period when finding that it would have been reasonably practicable for him to present his claim in time.

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[Gareth Graham](#) and [Matthew Curtis](#) examine the options in this employment law webinar first broadcast on 21 April 2021 and look at the potential pitfalls for businesses looking to make redundancies or organisational changes due to pressures caused by reduced activity.

Read their notes and answers to the most common questions received.

[Watch the webinar on 'Preparing to trade in a post-pandemic economy: options available to employers facing uncertain times here.](#)

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The strictness of contractual appeal time limits

[Matthew Curtis](#) analyses *Joseph v Deloitte NSE LLP* [2020] EWCA Civ, and reminds us that where contractual rights of appeal are involved, it is essential to get the appeal in within the time specified in the contract, even in if the employer has delayed another part of the process.

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Cost plus: still alive and kicking?

[Matthew Curtis](#) analyses *Heskett v Secretary of State for Justice* [2020] EWCA Civ 1487, a case likely to make it easier for employers to prove they have a legitimate aim in age discrimination cases.

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Workplace monitoring in a remote working age

[Matthew Curtis](#) reviews the legal risks involved with monitoring employees and puts forward practical tips to help ensure compliance of any surveillance system with the expected standards.

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Working time and time again: how to measure time? [Matthew Curtis](#) analyses the CJEU decision in *Federación de Servicios de Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) v Deutsche Bank SAE* (C55-18)

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Employment specialist [Matthew Curtis](#) provides an employment case law update covering:

1. Tribunal fees – the latest position
2. Suspension – the risks
3. ACAS Early conciliation – the latest skirmishes in an ongoing war (*De Mota v ADR Network & anor* UKEAT/0305/16)
4. Presidential guidance – pensions and Vento
5. Burden of proof in discrimination claims

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Evidence in Disability Cases: where are we now? By [Matthew Curtis](#).

[Matthew Curtis](#) reviews some recent decisions regarding evidential issues in disability discrimination cases, with a particular focus on:

- Stress as a disability
- Principal's liability for acts of their agents
- Knowledge of disability, in particular who has to know for a claim to succeed?
- Indirect discrimination: the standard of evidence required
- Dismissing for long-term absence where there is late evidence from the employee

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