

Kate Blackwell KC

Head of Lincoln House Chambers

Call to Bar: 1992

King's Counsel: 2012



"Kate Blackwell KC is renowned for her experience in high-profile public inquiries, whether as counsel to the inquiry or acting for core participants. She possesses strong expertise in matters relating to failures in the provision of medical care, and counts the NHS among her clients." - Inquest and Public Inquiries - Chambers and Partners 2024

"She is very well prepared on cross-examination and has an impressive knowledge of the papers." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers and Partners 2024

"Kate is a superb advocate and her speeches are works of art. She is excellent with clients, her preparation is meticulous, and she has a tremendous court presence; she ticks every box." - Tier 1 Crime (General and Fraud) - Legal 500 2024

"Kate is a tenacious advocate who does not hold back from difficult questions, has a measured manner, and is always thinking ahead. She is all over the detail and is great at leading a team." - Tier 1 Inquests and Inquiries - Legal 500 2024

"Kate is an exceptional Silk. Always on top of every detail, always prepared, always responsive to both the solicitor and the client on a case. Judges love her - and so do clients. She will give tough advice as she is always focussed on getting the best result. One of the best criminal silks in the country and an exceptional strategic thinker." Tier 1 Crime (General and Fraud) - Legal 500 2023

"Kate is extremely hard working, sees the bigger picture, and manages clients and other counsel deftly and tactfully. She inspires confidence in her strategy and enthusiasm from her team." Tier 1 Inquests and Inquiries - Legal 500 2023

"One of the best silks in the country with an acquittal rate second to none." Ranked: Tier 1 – Legal 500, 2022

"Fantastic with clients, and great at explaining complexities in a way that is understandable and clear. Reassuring and calm in the face of a challenge." – Legal 500 2022

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Practice areas:

Inquiries & Inquests
Criminal Law
Business Crime & Financial Regulation
Regulatory
Professional Discipline

Professional appointments:

Head of Chambers 2023
Appointed as Crown Court Recorder in 2009
Appointed as Queens Counsel in 2012
Deputy Head of Lincoln House Chambers 2016
Master of the Bench Lincolns Inn 2017
Member of the Criminal Bar Association

“She is the best silk I’ve worked with – her trial preparation is meticulous, she is brilliant on strategy and she is great with clients. Her jury speeches are a work of art.” – Chambers & Partners, 2022

“A stylish advocate.” – Chambers & Partners, 2022

“She is very good at zoning in on the important things in time- and paper-intensive matters. She is also excellent with clients and instils confidence.” – Chambers & Partners, 2022

“She is a fantastic advocate who is great with clients, very approachable and always available. Great on her feet.” “Clients love her: she’s professional, hard-working, and manages a team very well.” – Chambers & Partners, 2021

“A go-to silk – a perfect combination of meticulous preparation and courtroom flair.” “She deals with really difficult and complex decisions with great sensitivity. She is strong, clear, firm and a good strategic thinker.” – Chambers & Partners, 2021

“A silk truly at the top of her game” – Legal 500 2020 and 2021

“A brilliant tactician.” – Chambers and Partners 2020

“She’s just fantastic; she’s very robust, very tenacious, and superbly charming. Has a very attractive advocacy style.” – Chambers and Partners 2020

“Barrister of the Year” – Manchester Legal Awards, 2019

“At the top of her game. One of the best cross-examiners on the circuit.” “Her trial strategy is second to none.” – Chambers & Partners, 2019

“Her speeches are pure genius.” – Legal 500, 2018

“She is a joy to instruct and is the silk you want in your corner when things get tough. One of the best cross-examiners on circuit and pure class all round.” “She is magnificent in court from start to finish; it is a pleasure to watch such skilled advocacy.” – Chambers & Partners, 2018

“A Master Tactician.” – Legal 500, 2017

“Barrister of the Year” – Manchester Legal Awards, 2017

“Regularly appears in complex white-collar and serious fraud cases, with noted experience in corruption and money laundering. She is also well known for her work on high-profile sexual offences, acting for both the prosecution and defence.”

Strengths: “She does high-profile work. She’s very hard-working and committed to her clients.” – Chambers & Partners, 2017

“Possibly the best crime silk on circuit; she has exceptional judgement and is an outstanding trial advocate” – Legal 500, 2016

“This criminal law specialist receives high praise from solicitors for her strong practice and advocacy skills. She is instructed by firms in cases of corruption, money laundering and fraud and also handles cases for private clients.” – Chambers & Partners, 2016

“An excellent barrister.” – Chambers & Partners, 2016

“She is an absolutely fantastic advocate.” – Chambers & Partners, 2015

“A robust advocate who has a strong track record in serious crime cases.” – Legal 500, 2015

“An excellent serious and business crime specialist” – Legal 500, 2014

“Has a specialism in serious and white-collar crime. She regularly appears for both the prosecution and the defence in high-profile cases. She is extraordinarily good with her preparation and advocacy.” – Chambers & Partners, 2014

“An excellent performer.” – Chambers & Partners, 2013

“Kate Blackwell handles the most serious criminal offences and impresses observers with her very hands-on approach. She is hugely responsive and I can call her any time of the day.” – Chambers & Partners, 2011

Kate has a formidable reputation as a first-class silk due to her skill, judgement and outstanding performance in serious and complex cases. Kate Blackwell KC is one of the UK’s leading silks specialising in criminal law and public inquiries. She is sought after for high-profile cases.

Kate is recommended by the leading legal publications year after year, she is considered one of the premier KC’s in the country and has been awarded the coveted Manchester Legal Awards Barrister of the Year Award in both 2017 and 2019.

The professional guides rank Kate as a “Tier 1” advocate.”

Kate is instructed by leading specialist firms of solicitors nationwide in the full range of criminal offences but is particularly well known for her expertise in sexual offences and her representation of high net individuals charged with cases of dishonesty, commercial fraud, corruption, violence and drugs offences.

Kate regularly presents lectures and seminars on all aspects on public inquiries serious crime, fraud, regulatory crime and health and safety law (including corporate manslaughter). She has advised a number of prosecution agencies (Police, HSE, CPS) on evidence gathering and case preparation.

Kate handles a high proportion of private client work. She is the counsel of choice for many solicitors who want to offer a bespoke and exceptional service to their private clients. She has successfully represented professionals including sports personalities, solicitors, accountants, bankers, insurance executives and medical professionals charged with business crime and all manner of sexual offences.

Following success in a recent case the client said ***"Kate was absolutely fantastic. I was extremely impressed by how quickly she grasped the case and focused on the most relevant points to have the case dismissed before trial. I would have no hesitation in recommending her to anyone that required the very best legal advice."***

"We can honestly say that throughout the whole process matters were dealt with professionally and efficiently at all times. From the very first introduction meeting to this conclusion we believe that we were given excellent and clear advice and thorough, professional case management. We also felt supported and that we had someone on our side throughout the difficult time."

"We thank you for bringing our family back together. For our little girl to have her daddy home is something that is so precious to us and her. You're our very own super hero, it's been an absolute pleasure working with you."

"Words cannot express the amount of happiness I can see in my parents eyes after such a long time and I cannot thank you enough and would like to give you the whole credit for this part of my life".

PUBLIC INQUIRIES

United Kingdom Covid Inquiry

Kate has been appointed Counsel to the Inquiry for the United Kingdom Covid Inquiry. She led Module 1 into the state of preparedness of the United Kingdom for a pandemic together with Hugo Keith KC. During the public hearings, Kate examined former prime minister David Cameron and former Chancellor George Osborne. Kate is currently leading the report writing for this Module and will return to the Inquiry next year to lead Module 11 into the effect of the pandemic on all public services. She is to lead the final module that will close the Inquiry.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2023/jun/19/austerity-not-responsible-for-nhs-weakness-during-covid-pandemic-says-cameron-video>

The Thirlwall Inquiry

Kate represents the former Chief Executives of the Countess of Chester hospital following the conviction of Lucy Letby for the murder and attempted murder of several neonatal babies.

Baroness Casey Review

Kate provided legal advice to the Review Team conducting the Baroness Casey Review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service. The review discussed whether the Met's leadership, recruitment, vetting, training, culture and communications supported the standards that the public should expect. It found that the organisation was institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/mar/21/metropolitan-police-institutionally-racist-misogynistic-homophobic-louise-casey-report>

Brook House Inquiry

Kate was instructed as Leading Counsel representing Serco in the Brook House Public Inquiry. This inquiry has been established to investigate the decision, actions and circumstances surrounding the mistreatment of individuals who were detained at Brook House

Immigration Removal Centre in 2017. The second phase of the hearings are due to begin in February 2022.

<https://brookhouseinquiry.org.uk/>

Gosport Independent Panel Inquiry

Kate was appointed by the Secretary of State for Health, as Lead Counsel and Panel Member to the Gosport Independent Panel in 2015. This Panel was constituted to examine and report on historical events which relate to the care, treatment and deaths of the patients of the Gosport War

Memorial Hospital (GWMH) in Portsmouth. The Panel's work was ongoing for four years and the Panel's report was published in June 2018. It received wide media national and international coverage. The Panel revealed the "Patronising Disposition of Unaccountable Power" as it estimated that at least 450 lives had been shortened at the hospital by an unjustified opioid regime. As Legal Lead, Panel member and Law Team Manager she wrote and conducted the extensive legal validation of the complete project.

www.gosportpanel.independent.gov.uk/panel-report

Daniel Morgan Independent Panel Inquiry

On 10 May 2013, in a written statement to Parliament, the then Home Secretary, the

Rt. Hon. Theresa May MP, announced that the Government was setting up the Daniel Morgan Independent Panel (DMIP) to review police handling of the murder investigation. Kate was appointed as Counsel to the Panel in September 2013.

The remit of the Panel is to shine a light on the circumstances of Daniel Morgan's murder, its background and the handling of the case over the period since 1987. In so doing the Panel is seeking to address questions arising, in particular those relating to police involvement in Daniel Morgan's murder; the role played by police corruption in protecting those responsible for the murder from being brought to justice and the failure to confront that corruption; and the incidence of connections between private investigators, police officers and journalists at the News of the World and other parts of the media, and alleged corruption involved in the linkages between them.

Kate has negotiated with numerous organisations, including the Metropolitan Police Service, in ensuring maximum possible disclosure of material to the Panel, in accordance with the Terms of Reference. She has met with senior officers of the MPS and the NCA in order to consider confidential and secret information and drafted agreements to ensure the protection of documentation and other information. The inquiry report was published in June 2021. www.danielmorganpanel.independent.gov.uk

The Shipman Inquiry

Kate was instructed to represent the Greater Manchester Police as Junior Counsel during this public inquiry into the murders committed by Dr Harold Shipman. Kate had been junior counsel for the prosecution during the criminal trial which resulted in guilty verdicts for murder in relation to a number of patients.

INQUESTS & REGULATORY LAW

Kate has been instructed in many substantial inquests. She is instructed in a number of roles by both professional bodies, individuals and government departments. Kate has a wealth of experience in defending individuals and companies charged with breaching regulations and has prosecuted many cases for the Health and Safety Executive, the Environment Agency and the Office of Rail Regulation.

Cases of interest and notoriety include the following:

8-week inquest touching the death of Paul McGuigan – Representing the National Offender Management Service in a case where a security operative employed by G4S in Iraq shot dead 2 colleagues.

Office of Rail Regulation – Prosecuting railway company convicted of breaching Health and Safety Offences where a disused depot had been left with live overhead cables causing the electrocution of a group of 13 year old boys, one of whom died.

Environment Agency v BP – Defending company manager charged with breaching environmental regulations in his waste management company.

R v D & others – Defending a director of Railtrack charged with gross negligence manslaughter and significant breaches of health and safety regulations.

R v T – Prosecution of a company whose breaches of H&S led to the death of employee at place of employment. Cross examined director of company over 4 days.

R v I – Prosecution of a company charged with breaching “waste” regulations. European legislation considered.

R v D – Defence of company director in prosecution brought by trading standards involving millions of pounds worth of goods and strong international element.

R v W & others – Fatal accident on demolition site.

CRIMINAL LAW

R v T - School teacher convicted of grooming a rape of an 11 year old pupil over a 5 year period

R v M - Grooming and rape of vulnerable child with severe learning difficulties.

R v G - Kidnap, rape and assault of several sex workers, one of whom had been trafficked.

R v B and others - Rape of a 4 year old family victim discovered when she was diagnosed with Gonorrhoea

R v B – Multiple historical abuse by music teacher.

R v S - Indian national charged with rape.

R v D - Indecent images charges against former police officer in position of trust.

Kate took silk in 2012, following 20 years of practice in criminal and regulatory law.

Kate is regularly briefed in all categories of crime ranging from serious sexual offences to murder and both white-collar and gang-related crime.

Recent cases involving sexual offences, for which her success rate is exceptional, include:

R v H – Defending a man charged with running a paedophile-ring including the abduction and abuse of a 14-year old boy.

R v J – Defending a psychiatric patient charged with sexual assault upon 2 nurses.

R v J - Prosecuted Premier League and England International footballer for child sex offences. Advised from the point of charge and presented the case through to trial, sentence and Court of Appeal. Convicted and sentenced to 6 years imprisonment. Successfully defended conviction and sentence appeals.

R v B - Case involving taking and producing thousands of images of young female and serious sexual assault. Legal applications included the anomaly produced by the age differential in the Protection of Children Act 1978 and the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

R v P - 22 year sentence handed down to defendant who had waged an 8 year campaign of grooming, rape, sexual assault, trafficking and assaulting a series of young females.

R v G - Allegations of historic sexual abuse of extended family members.

R v D - Allegations of historic abuse of sister.

R v C - Sexual touching of 13-year old boy.

R v L - Private tutor charged with sexual offences against students.

BUSINESS CRIME

Throughout her career, Kate has been instructed in substantial cases of mortgage fraud, VAT fraud, corruption and MTIC fraud. She regularly represents high net-worth individuals and companies facing financial investigation. Her keen knowledge, thorough preparation and tenacity are key skills for which she is highly sought after. She advises professionals prior to and during the course of criminal proceedings.

Recent cases include:

R v A – Defending a business man charged with conspiring with others to launder money. HMRC offered no evidence after extensive written argument, all restraints lifted.

R v LS & others – Defending a woman in a multi-million pound fraud and money laundering operation. Following lengthy disclosure arguments the case collapsed leading to not guilty verdicts for all the defendants.

R v W & others – Defending a man in a substantial waste disposal/weighbridge fraud. Not guilty verdict entered against him in circumstances where the majority of other defendants were convicted.

R v C & others – Defending a woman in an MTIC fraud of EU exporters. At the time this was the largest and most complex fraud of its type, involving at least £400 million worth of mobile telephones being traded and a loss to the Revenue of at least £85 million.

R v F & others – Defending a Maltese national in a £13 million diversion fraud involving a strong international element and a culture of non-disclosure and misinformation. Successful defence in circumstances where client had developed severe mental health difficulties during course of the trial.

R v W & others – Fraudulent trading and blackmail. Successfully defended a woman who was the only one of 4 indicted defendants to be acquitted.

R v B & others – The provision of advice given to a company director during the currency of an investigation into a £ multimillion MTIC fraud.

R v O & others – Prosecution of 3 defendants charged with fraud on a substantial scale involving the commission of “disqualified director” offences.

Oldham Trading Standards v VM & others – Defending a woman in a conspiracy alleging the fraudulent running of a kitchen business. Case stopped as an abuse of process after a 4 month trial.

R v R & others – Representing the main defendant in an alleged MTIC carousel fraud depriving HMRC of over £100million.

Operation Oceanus – Successfully prosecuting three defendants charged with fraudulent trading and “disqualified director” offences.

HOMICIDE AND VIOLENCE

Kate has been involved in the prosecution of many such cases, often advising on disclosure, PII and conducting lengthy and complicated “ex-parte” hearings. For the defence she has made many successful disclosure and abuse of process applications.

Cases of interest include the following:

R v HS – Part of the prosecution team in a trial involving allegations of multiple murder.

R v H – Defending man charged with the manslaughter of a police officer.

R v C – Defending man charged with murder of man whose body was found to have suffered 97 separate injuries.

R v A & T – Prosecuting mother and father whose neglect led to the death of their premature baby.

R v K – Prosecuting man convicted of murdering his partner in the presence of their 3 children.

R v C & others – Prosecuting a 7-handed murder and drugs conspiracy.

R v GP – The “Lady in the Lake” murder case. Prosecuting a defendant charged with murdering his wife and hiding her body at the bottom of Coniston Lake, Cumbria.

R v A & others – Prosecuting part of the “Oldham Riots” cases.

R v S & others – Prosecuting the 6-handed murder of an Ormskirk businessman.

R v A & others – Prosecuting an extensive people trafficking and false documents case.

R v F & F – Prosecuting identical twins for gangland shooting. One of first Anonymous witness applications to be made.

R v MNK & others – Prosecution of armed robbery based upon DNA evidence.

R v J – Defending in retrial of defendant for murder of PC Sharon Beshenevsky.

R v C – Defending schizophrenic man charged with attempted murder by multiple stabbing.

R v K & others – Prosecution of a major drugs conspiracy extending from the North West to Wales and Scotland.

R v FM – Defending a man charged with conspiracy to supply large quantities of heroin involving the use of entrapment. Preliminary legal argument lasted 5 weeks. Successfully reduced case against defendant by half.

R v JI – Defending the main defendant in a multi-handed case involving a major Rochdale drugs gang; issues of autrefois acquit and bad character based upon previous acquittals.

R v H & others – Defending in an extensive drug ring supplying serving prisoners and involving prison officers.

R v P & P – Prosecuting husband and wife prison officers convicted of perverting the course of justice and misconduct in a public office.

R v L – Prosecution of a police officer charged with perjury and perverting the course of justice both a trial and re-trial.

LINCOLN HOUSE CHAMBERS