

Kate Blackwell KC

Head of Lincoln House Chambers

Call to Bar: 1992

King's Counsel: 2012



"Kate Blackwell KC outshines everyone." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2026

"Kate Blackwell KC is a force to be reckoned with." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Kate Blackwell KC is absolutely first class." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Kate is the best silk. She is exceptionally thorough, practical, approachable and a true leader. Her advocacy is masterful" - Legal 500, 2026

"Kate is extremely knowledgeable and an expert in this area. She has the full spectrum of talent." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2026

"Clients love Kate Blackwell KC. She is very good strategically and very good on her feet." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2026

"Kate has an incredible combination of leadership, team-work, strategy and advocacy skills which puts her at the top of the league in acting for chairs and core participants on public inquiries. Clients like and respect her and she is a pleasure to work with as part of a team" - Legal 500, 2026

"Her cross-examination and closing speeches are outstanding and she is a commanding and engaging advocate." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Her tactical genius and unmatched advocacy skills are a direct result of experience." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Kate has a very easy-going manner and is an excellent advocate who puts witnesses at ease and gets to the heart of the main issues." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2026

Contact details:

Katherine.Blackwell@lincolnhousechambers.com

Clerk Contact details:

Dwright@lincolnhousechambers.com

David Wright - 0161 832 5701

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

Kate Blackwell KC

Her strengths are that she is very responsive, extremely intelligent, gets to the heart of the key issues straight away." Legal 500, 2025

Head of Chambers Kate Blackwell KC has a formidable reputation as a first-class silk due to her skill, judgement and a history of outstanding performances in serious and complex cases of national public interest. Kate is one of the UK's leading silks specialising in public inquiries, serious crime, regulatory law and inquests.

Kate deals with high-profile cases and represents high net-worth individuals when facing cases involving significant reputational risk, financial consequence and threat to liberty. She is the counsel of choice for many solicitors who want a bespoke and exceptional service for their private clients.

Kate is regularly instructed on behalf of public bodies, private companies and as Counsel to the Inquiry in statutory and non-statutory inquiries. She has over 15-years experience as a Judge in the Crown Court presiding over serious criminal trials and presents seminars and training on all aspects of public inquiries and the criminal law, including corporate manslaughter.

Kate is expert in handling complex questions of evidence and brings strategic, cross-disciplinary experience to all of her practice. She has recently been instructed to chair a review of government legislation and has provided executive training and strategic consultancy to a number of prosecution and regulatory agencies including on evidence gathering and disclosure.

From early in her career, Kate has been recommended, year after year, by the leading legal publications as a "Tier 1" advocate. She is considered one of the premier award-winning KCs in the country and has a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity.

Kate is a Master of the Bench at Lincoln's Inn.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES

Kate is recognised as a leader in the field having been described in the 2025 and 2026 legal publications as "*absolutely first class*", "*a force to be reckoned with*" and "*exceptionally thorough, practical, approachable - a true leader*." She is frequently appointed as Counsel to the Inquiry by Secretaries of State to lead legal teams, develop terms of reference, strategically advise, examine key witnesses and deliver recommendations. Kate's work involves the most sensitive and legally complex issues, including failings in government policy, exposing corrupt practice, uncovering multi-layer cover-up attempts, systematic failings in multi-disciplinary healthcare, substandard maternity care and hospital governance processes, serious safeguarding failings, avoidable neonatal deaths and bereavement.

Significant public inquiries include:

United Kingdom Covid Inquiry

Kate has been appointed by the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE as Counsel to the Inquiry for the United Kingdom Covid Inquiry in its first and final modules. She led Module 1 into the state of preparedness of the United Kingdom for a pandemic together with Hugo Keith KC during which she examined former prime minister David Cameron and former Chancellor George Osborne. Kate now leads Module 10 examining the impact of Covid on the population of the United Kingdom with a particular focus on mental health and well-being, key workers, the most vulnerable in society and the bereaved. Public hearings will take place in February and March 2026.

<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 in the Thirlwall Inquiry examining the events at the Countess of Chester Hospital and their implications following the trial, and subsequent convictions, of the former neonatal nurse Lucy Letby of murder and attempted murder of babies at the hospital. This has included cross-examining the paediatric consultants and other hospital managers, responding to media requests, applying for the Inquiry to suspend its work and leading the team in drafting responses to Inquiry Rule 13 warning letters.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8e72kx7k1lo>

Baroness Casey Review

Kate provided expert 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>

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Kate represented NHS England in the Manchester Arena Inquiry – established to investigate the deaths of the 22 victims of the 2017 Manchester Terror Attack and the emergency response to the attack.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6363d508e90e0705a935f36d/MAI-Vol2-Part_i_Accessible_.pdf

Brook House Inquiry

Kate was instructed as Lead Counsel representing Serco in the Brook House Public Inquiry established to investigate the decision, actions and circumstances surrounding the mistreatment of individuals who were detained at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre.

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

Jermaine Baker Inquiry

Kate was appointed by the Home Secretary as Counsel to the Inquiry in the Jermaine Baker Public Inquiry into the circumstances of the death of Jermaine Baker during a Metropolitan Police Service operation on 11 December 2015.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jul/05/jermaine-baker-lawfully-shot-dead-met-officer-inquiry>

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, constituted to examine and report on historical events related to the care, treatment and deaths the patients of the Gosport War Memorial Hospital in Portsmouth. The panel's work was ongoing for four years and received wide media national and international attention. 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 Kate wrote and conducted the extensive legal validation on behalf of the Inquiry.

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

Daniel Morgan Independent Panel Inquiry

Kate was appointed by the Home Secretary as Lead Counsel to the Daniel Morgan Independent Panel, established to shine a light on the circumstances of Daniel Morgan's murder, its background and the handling of the case by the Metropolitan Police Service. In so doing the Panel addressed 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. Kate negotiated with numerous organisations in ensuring maximum possible disclosure of material to the Panel, in accordance with its Terms of Reference. She met with senior officers of the MPS and the NCA to consider confidential and secret information and drafted agreements to ensure the protection of documentation.

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 previously been junior counsel for the prosecution during the criminal trial which resulted in guilty verdicts for murder in relation to a number of patients.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7b99ae40f0b645ba3c55db/5854.pdf>

INQUESTS & REGULATORY LAW

Kate has been instructed in many substantial inquests in a number of roles by 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. Her expertise straddles the interface between inquest, regulatory and criminal proceedings.

Significant cases include:

Inquest touching the death of PM – 8 week hearing representing the National Offender Management Service in a case where a security operative employed by G4S in Iraq shot dead 2 colleagues.

Inquest touching the death of CF – death in immigration detention including other statutory agencies and complex safeguarding issues.

Inquest touching the death of KL – suicide of inmate. Considered historical and systemic failures in custodial care.

Inquest touching the death of BB – representing the family of inmate who received negligent medical care which led to his death. Involved safeguarding oversight and inter-agency working.

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 Health and Safety led to the death of employee at place of employment. Cross examined CEO over four 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 – Defence of company prosecuted for a fatal accident on a demolition site.

SEXUAL OFFENCES

Significant cases include:

R v ME – successful defence of footballer charged with rape.

R v TL – successful defence of actor charged with rape.

R v JB – successful defence of student charged with rape. Case stopped following a successful abuse of process argument.

R v JD – successful defence of international businessman charged with rape.

R v MA – successful defence of dentist charged with historical rape.

R v MM – successful defence of businessman charged with coercive and controlling behaviour.

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

R v J – successful defence of a psychiatric patient charged with sexual assault upon two nurses.

R v B and others – successful defence of father of a 4 year old for rape and sexual offences.

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R v J – successful prosecution of 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.

BUSINESS CRIME

Throughout her career, Kate has been instructed in substantial cases of mortgage fraud, VAT fraud and corruption. 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.

Significant cases include:

R v A – Defending an international business man charged with conspiring with others to launder money. HMRC offered no evidence after extensive written and oral 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 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.

Previous Directory Quotes & Awards:

"Kate Blackwell KC is a calm and authoritative presence." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2026

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"Kate has a very easy-going manner and is an excellent advocate who puts witnesses at ease and gets to the heart of the main issues." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2026

"She strongly represents the client, never shying away from raising points." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Kate is an excellent all-rounder and great with clients." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"She goes the extra mile in preparing cases, is exceptionally thorough and communicates well." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"She is a brilliant trial advocate, who is tactically very astute." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Her presence in court with the jury is a joy to watch and clients are always impressed." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Her commitment and expertise are second to none." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Her tactical genius and unmatched advocacy skills are a direct result of experience." Band 1 - Crime - Chambers & Partners 2025

"Kate is an exceptional trial advocate, an extremely skillful operator, brilliant on tactical decision making, and great to work with." - Legal 500, 2025

"Kate Blackwell delivers powerful but measured advocacy and she is lovely to work with as leader." Band 1 - Inquests & Public Inquiries - Chambers & Partners 2025

"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 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 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

Kate Blackwell KC

“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

“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