

Harry Laidlaw

Call: 2018

"He has an excellent eye for detail and is always well prepared for conferences and hearings. He impresses clients with his advocacy and direct approach."

Chambers UK 2025 (Crime)



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Harry Laidlaw specialises in crime, inquests, public inquiries and health and safety work.

His grounding is in crime and he regularly acts for the prosecution and defence across the spectrum of serious criminal offences. Recently he has been involved in cases involving serious violence (including murder), firearms, drugs offences, fraud, rape and child sex offences. He is often instructed to represent vulnerable individuals who suffer with a range of mental health difficulties.

Harry also has experience defending in cases brought by a wide range of enforcement authorities such as the Health and Safety Executive. Recent instructions include defending in the case of *Reading Borough Council v R P Ltd*, a child death health and safety prosecution, and defending a director of a company charged with various Health and Safety at Work Act offences after an employee died at work.

He has extensive experience representing those afforded interested person status at inquests including medical professionals, care homes, medical facilities, companies and families of the deceased. He is particularly adept at acting in inquests with complex medical or health and safety issues and for professionals who are at risk of criticism.

Harry also has experience representing core participants at public inquiries, he is currently instructed as junior counsel to Post Office Ltd in the Horizon IT Public Inquiry.

Outside of court work Harry regularly advises organisations and individuals at the pre charge stage in matters of a criminal or quasi criminal nature. He is currently instructed by Peters & Peters as junior counsel in relation to the Post Office 'Horizon' Appeals reviewing hundreds of convictions from the Post Office's use of data from the Horizon computer system in prosecutions between 2000 and 2014.

Harry acts on both a private and publicly funded basis.

Additionally, Harry has recently been ranked as a 'Rising Star' junior in the 2025 Legal 500 Inquests and Inquiries section, and has been noted as 'Up & Coming' in Chambers UK Bar 2025 for Crime.

Expertise

Criminal Defence

Harry has a strong defence practice and has extensive experience in all aspects of general crime including serious violence (including murder), firearms, drugs and sexual offences and regularly acts in cases far beyond his year of call.

In recent years Harry has acted as sole counsel in a drugs cases involving in excess of a million pounds of heroin and was a led junior in the Court of Appeal in a case involving the murder of a child.

Harry is particularly skilled at managing cases with large amounts of documentation and has experience defending those charged with fraud, money laundering and other financial offences.

Harry has considerable experience representing defendants with complex medical needs and vulnerabilities having undertaken specialist training in this area.

Notable defence cases:

R v JE (2024)

Acted alone for JE who was charged with multiple counts of rape and assault by penetration of his ex-partner. The case involved complex cross examination of a Complainant who gave evidence with the assistance of an intermediary. After a 6 day trial at Peterborough Crown Court the Defendant was acquitted of all counts on the indictment.

R v JN (2024)

Acted alone for JN who was charged with multiple counts of rape in relation to his ex-partner. Both parties were 15 at the time of the alleged offending. After a week-long trial at Cambridge Crown Court JN was unanimously acquitted of all counts.

R v JO (2024)

Acted alone for JO, a youth, who was charged with multiple counts of rape and sexual assault in relation to his neighbour. Following cross examination of the complainant the prosecution offered no evidence on several counts. The judge dismissed the remaining counts after a successful submission of no case to answer.

R v SN (2024)

Junior alone for SN, who is charged with controlling a brothel and controlling prostitution.

R v TJ (2023)

Led junior for TJ, a 17-year-old who suffered with autism. TJ was accused, along with another, of hacking into BT/EE and ransomware information. He was charged with Computer Misuse Act offences, fraud and blackmail. After a two-month trial at Southwark CC TJ was acquitted of a number of charges.

R v GP (2023)

Currently acting for GP, an ex-police officer who is accused of operating a drug line between Manchester and Devon which had

transported around 5kgs of cocaine. Case ongoing at Exeter CC.

R v BP (2023)

Currently acting for BP, a builder, who is charged with fraud in relation to various building projects. BP is accused of defrauding several elderly and vulnerable individuals. Case ongoing at Nottingham CC.

R v HC (2021)

Led junior in the Court of Appeal for HC. It was submitted on behalf of HC that her conviction for the murder of her infant was unsafe due to fresh psychiatric evidence not adduced at trial.

R v BO (2023)

Acted alone for BO, an ex-Army corporal who was charged with defrauding AIG, the insurers, having exaggerated the extent of injuries he suffered whilst serving in Iraq.

R v CR (2022)

Acted alone for CR who was accused of conspiring to supply over £1m worth of cocaine and heroin after he was found in a garage which had been converted into a drug factory. CR was acquitted after a 5 day trial at Harrow CC.

Inquests & Public Inquiries

Harry has developed a strong practice in Coroner's Inquests and Public Inquiries, particularly those involving complex medical or health and safety issues. His experience includes representing medical professionals who have been afforded interested person status, companies at inquests into the death of employees and families of the deceased.

Harry also has experience representing core participants at Public Inquiries. He is currently acting for Post Office Limited in the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry.

Notable Cases:

Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Instructed as junior counsel to Post Office Limited, a core participant in the Post Office Horizon Inquiry.

Inquest touching upon the death of JH (Middlesbrough Coroner's Court)

Instructed to represent CNL, a pipework and mechanical installation company, in a jury inquest following the death of an employee who ruptured his spleen whilst at work. After submissions about what should and should not be left to the jury the jury were directed to not consider any issues relating to the companies' health and safety procedures. The jury returned a verdict of accident and made no adverse findings in relation to the company.

Inquest touching upon the death of GB (West Yorkshire Coroner's Court)

Instructed to represent the family of GB who died at the hands of her partner. Her partner subsequently committed suicide. The case involved extensive and complicated submissions surrounding unlawful act manslaughter, gross negligence manslaughter and the conclusion of unlawful killing. The Coroner returned a short form conclusion of unlawful killing.

Inquest touching upon the death of Y (Eastbourne Coroner's Court)

Instructed to represent a private medical centre at an inquest into the death of a patient who had undergone routine knee surgery. The patient sadly died of various complications arising from an extremely rare rupture of a pancreatic vessel whilst in post operative care. After oral submissions and extensive questioning of expert medical witnesses the Coroner returned a narrative verdict which noted that the care the patient was provided by the private medical centre was commendable and the death was rare and unforeseeable.

Inquest touching upon the death of JH (Swansea Coroner's Court)

Instructed to represent a care home at an inquest into the death of a resident who died of a stroke after her medication was mislaid. After oral and written submissions, the Court provided a favourable narrative verdict and did not make a prevention of future death report.

Inquest touching upon the death of DB (Bournemouth Coroner's Court)

Instructed to represent a company after one of their workers, whilst at work, reversed and allegedly struck JJ who subsequently died. The case involved complex issues of fact. After a protracted inquest the Coroner could not be satisfied that the employee had in fact struck JJ and returned a verdict of accident.

Inquest touching upon the death of KE (West London Coroner's Court)

Instructed to represent a GP surgery in an inquest following the death of KE. KE was one of the first individuals to die of suspected blood clotting complications from the COVID Astra-Zeneca jab.

Public Prosecution

Harry regularly prosecutes on behalf of the CPS and other prosecuting authorities.

Harry is a CPS Level 3 prosecutor.

Sports Law

Harry has developed a detailed knowledge of sports regulatory law having recently been seconded to the Football Association.

During his secondment at the FA he was involved in the investigation, charging and case management of a number of matters including player misconduct, crowd control and betting.

He regularly appears in front of the Regulatory Commission of the FA as well as the Appeal Board.

Notable Cases:

Football Association v CH

Harry represented the Football Association in proceedings brought before the Appeal Board of the FA. The appeal related to a Disciplinary Commission's decision to find an allegation of homophobic language from a player to a match official not proven.

Football Association v RE

Harry represented the Football Association in proceedings brought before the Regulatory Commission of the FA against RE, a manager accused of improper/violent conduct. RE was given a short suspension from football related activity and was ordered to pay a contribution to the FA's costs.

Football Association v CO & CO

Harry represented the FA in proceedings brought before the Regulatory Commission of the FA against CO & CO, two participants accused of breaching the FA's global ban on betting.

Health & Safety

Harry has acted alone and led in a number of Health and Safety prosecutions. He has particular experience of cases relating to workplace deaths and prosecutions brought under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. He is particularly skilled at providing advice pre charge as well as representing companies and individuals at trial and/or sentencing hearings.

Notable cases:

Reading Borough Council v Arcadia Group Ltd, Topshop/Topman, R P Ltd and Stoneforce Ltd

Instructed as led junior in Reading Borough Council v R P Ltd, a child death health and safety prosecution for R P Ltd. All defendants, Arcadia Group Ltd, Topshop Topman, R P Ltd and Stoneforce Ltd were charged with s.3 HSWA 1974 offences relating to a queue barrier that fell and killed a 10 year old boy in the Topman Topshop store located in the Oracle Centre, Reading in February 2017. R P Ltd were acquitted of design, manufacture and supply allegations following an expert heavy trial that lasted over two months.

HSE v AN

Instructed as sole junior to represent AN, the sole director of BGL, a glazing company, who were charged with offences under s. 2 & 3 of the HSWA 1974. The case arose out of the death of an employee who died after a number of reinforced glass panes fell on him. AN pleaded guilty having received extensive advice and was sentenced to a suspended sentence at Southwark Crown Court.

Consumer & Trading Standards

Harry has acted in various Local Authority and Trading Standards cases and other criminal proceedings in the consumer context.

Notable Cases:

LBI v SR

Harry prosecuted SR, on behalf of London Borough of Islington Trading Standards, in a case concerning the importation and subsequent attempted sale of a large number of e-scooters and e-bikes which were found to be unsafe. SR was charged with various counts under the General Product Safety Regulations and Supply of Machinery Regulations. SR changed his plea on the first day of trial.

LBW v ST (2023)

Harry prosecuted ST who was accused of false accounting and unlawfully subletting council owned properties on behalf of London Borough of Wandsworth at Kingston CC. ST changed her plea on the first day of trial.