

Kate Blackwell KC

“One of the best silks in the country with an acquittal rate second to none.”

Legal 500 2022 Tier 1 Leading Silk Crime



Year of Call: 1992 KC: 2012

020 7353 5324

Kate is one of the UK's leading silks specialising in criminal law and public inquiries. She is sought after for high-profile cases and is instructed by leading firms of solicitors nationwide often on behalf of public figures. Kate has a formidable reputation as a first-class silk due to her skill, judgement and outstanding performance in serious and complex cases. The professional guides rank Kate as a “Tier 1” advocate.

Kate is tactically masterful. She accepts a high proportion of privately-funded instructions on behalf of high net-worth individuals and organisations facing criminal investigation. She has a daunting success rate for getting cases dismissed with pre-charge representations and is brought in to advise before a suspect is even interviewed.

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. Media Lnk : [The Guardian – Austerity not responsible for NHS weakness during Covid pandemic, says Cameron – video.](#)

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. Media Links: [The Guardian – Metropolitan police found to be institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic](#) | [The Times – Baroness Casey review: Met Police has lost public faith, says report.](#)

She represented NHS England in the Manchester Arena Inquiry into the 2017 Manchester Arena Terror Attack. [Manchester Arena Inquiry.](#)

Kate represented Serco in the Brook House Inquiry into the mistreatment of individuals who were detained at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre. [Brook House Inquiry.](#)

She was appointed by the Home Secretary as Leading Counsel to the Jermaine Baker Inquiry – an independent

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public inquiry into the shooting of Jermaine Baker during a Metropolitan Police Service operation. [Jermaine Baker Inquiry](#).

Kate was Counsel to the Inquiry on the Gosport Memorial Hospital Inquiry into the treatment and care of elderly patients at the hospital which found there to have been a disregard for human life and a culture of shortening the lives of a large number of patients. [Gosport Independent Panel Report](#).

Kate was Counsel to the Daniel Morgan Independent Panel, set up to address questions relating to police involvement in the murder of Daniel Morgan, the role played by police corruption and the incidence of corrupt connections between private investigators, police officers and journalists at the News of the World. [Daniel Morgan Independent Panel Report](#).

She has an outstanding track record in having cases dismissed and winning jury trials. 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.*”

What others say:

“She is very well prepared on cross-examination and has an impressive knowledge of the papers.” – Chambers UK 2024

“Kate is a serene silk with an incisive approach to cases, and she deals with the evidence in a measured and appropriate way.” – Legal 500 UK 2024

“Kate is an extremely knowledgeable barrister.” and “Hugely respected on the Northern Circuit.” – Chambers UK 2023

“Kate is fantastic with clients and is brilliant at cutting through complex challenging concepts and providing easy-to-understand practical advice. She is also a great team player.” – Legal 500 UK 2023

“A stylish advocate.” “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 UK 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 UK 2022

“One of the best silks in the country with an acquittal rate second to none.” – Legal 500 UK 2022 (Crime)

“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

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

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

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very well.” – Chambers UK 2021

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

“A brilliant tactician.” – Chambers & Partners 2020

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

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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

Business Crime & Financial Services

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.

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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.

Criminal Defence

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 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 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 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.

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 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 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 T – School teacher convicted of grooming a rape of an 11 year old pupil over a 5 year period.

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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.

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.

Criminal Regulatory

Kate has been 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:

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.

Inquests & Public Inquiries

Kate is recognised as a public inquiry expert.

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Manchester Arena Inquiry

Kate has been instructed to represent NHS England in the Manchester Arena Inquiry – an independent public inquiry to investigate the deaths of the 22 victims of the 2017 Manchester Terror Attack. www.manchesterarenainquiry.org.uk

Jermaine Baker Inquiry

Kate is Leading Counsel to the Jermaine Baker Inquiry – an independent public inquiry into the shooting of Jermaine Baker during a Metropolitan Police Service operation.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/jermaine-baker-inquiry-terms-of-reference

Gosport Independent Panel

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

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 final report is in the process of being drafted. www.danielmorganpanel.independent.gov.uk

The Shipman Inquiry

Represented the Greater Manchester Police as Junior Counsel during this protracted public inquiry.

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.

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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.

Public Prosecution

Kate is an experienced prosecutor who has been instructed in cases of importance and complexity. She has excellent attention to detail and is known for her success in case strategy. She has significant expertise in advising the police and prosecuting lawyers on the handling of highly sensitive material. The Guardian once referred to Kate as a “no nonsense prosecutor”.

Notable Cases:

R v HS

Part of the prosecution team in a trial involving allegations of multiple murder.

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.

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R v MNK & others

Prosecution of armed robbery based upon DNA evidence.

R v K & others

Prosecution of a major drugs conspiracy extending from the North West to Wales and Scotland.

R v P & P

Prosecuting husband and wife prison officers convicted of perverting the course of justice and misconduct in a public office.

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

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.

Accreditations



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Winner

Barrister of the Year



Winner

Barrister of the Year

Appointments & Memberships

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

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