

Laura Stephenson

"Decisive and thorough, she defends clients with tenacity. Excellent at handling witnesses and at delivering unwelcome information in a firm but empathetic manner."

Legal 500 UK 2021



Year of Call: 2012

020 7353 5324

Laura has a busy and diverse practice, specialising in crime, professional discipline, inquest and tax work. She is ranked in the Legal 500 as a leading junior in professional discipline. She appears in the High Court, Court of Appeal and Crown Court, as well as a range of professional discipline settings. She is adept at tackling cases involving health care professionals and complex medical issues, which often traverse her practice areas.

She is instructed to defend in criminal cases that are particularly serious for her level of call, including rape and serious child sex offences. Laura is led in complex cases; recent trials in which she has acted as a junior include international drugs conspiracies, money counterfeiting and people trafficking.

Laura is a specialist professional discipline advocate. She has a busy defence practice at the MPTS and NMC. She also appears on behalf of accountants at a range of regulatory bodies. She prosecutes on behalf of the GOsC, GOC and RICS.

Laura's significant experience in representing medical professionals also extends to inquests, where she regularly defends on behalf of doctors, care homes and Trusts.

In tax, Laura is instructed on behalf of HMRC to appear at the First-tier Tribunal in her own right and as a led junior. Laura's experience in these complicated, paper-heavy cases has enhanced her ability to approach complex financial issues across all practice areas with meticulousness and confidence.

What Others Say:

"Decisive and thorough, she defends clients with tenacity. Excellent at handling witnesses and at delivering unwelcome information in a firm but empathetic manner." – Legal 500 UK 2021

Location

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Criminal Defence

Laura is instructed to defend in cases spanning a wide range of seriousness, including rape, child sexual abuse, s.18 assault, fraud, and drugs offences. Examples of cases she is currently instructed in as junior counsel include international people trafficking and historic child sexual abuse.

Laura has been instructed as sole counsel in a money laundering case with a value of over £2 million and is currently being led in a counterfeiting currency case valued at over £5 million. She is skilled at managing the voluminous paperwork and extensive disclosure that often arises in such cases. Her significant practice in the Tax Tribunal enables her to approach complex financial crime with confidence, she has particular knowledge in VAT and customs and excise.

Examples of recent notable cases:

R v E [2021]

Junior counsel for the first defendant who is accused of controlling prostitution, forced labour, rape and people trafficking in respect of a number of women allegedly trafficked from South America to the UK.

R v S [2021]

Defended a man accused of the rape of a 17-year-old girl who was attacked by a stranger on the street. The defence made successful legal applications before trial about the complainant's sexual history and the admissibility of expert evidence. This was one of several cases Laura has dealt with involving the s.28 pre-recorded cross examination procedure.

R v May [2020] EWCA Crim 365

Defended a woman of good character who pleaded guilty to causing death by careless driving. At the Court of Appeal, a sentence of 24 weeks' immediate imprisonment was replaced with a suspended sentence. An order for an extended driving test after obligatory disqualification from driving was also successfully appealed.

R v C [2020]

Represented a man accused of committing two random stabbings of women on the street in East London. The defendant was found not fit to plead and Laura acted in his interests at trial and sentence. The defendant received a hospital order. The case received attention in the local and national press.

R v K [2019]

Defended a man accused of rape, false imprisonment and assault occasioning actual bodily harm. He pleaded guilty to false imprisonment, but denied rape. The defendant was acquitted of rape and assault after a trial.

R v D [2018]

Junior counsel to Narita Bahra QC in a complex case involving the international supply of drugs and unauthorised medicines.

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Inquests & Public Inquiries

Laura has a busy inquest practice, predominantly acting on behalf of healthcare professionals. She represents NHS Trusts, care homes, doctors and nurses. Recent examples of instructions include:

- Representing a Trust providing addiction and mental health services in prison involved in a 4-week jury inquest;
- Acting on behalf of a GP who performed a mental health assessment on a patient shortly before the patient jumped from a multi-storey car park;
- Representing a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon following the death of a patient from infection shortly after post-operative discharge;
- Representing a nurse who was providing 1:1 care for a 7-year-old when he died in a post-operative care;
- Representing a care home following the escape of a resident who fell and died after leaving the home.

Laura has extensive working experience of public inquiries and inquests. She assisted with the review and preparation of evidence for organisations involved in the Hillsborough Inquests, and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. She acted as disclosure junior for an interested party in the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry.

Professional Discipline

Laura is ranked in the Legal 500 as a leading junior in professional disciplinary and regulatory law. She prosecutes and defends in a range of professional disciplinary settings, particularly specialising in healthcare matters.

She is regularly instructed to defend registrants before the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service at both interim and final hearings. She also defends at the Nursing and Midwifery Council, Social Work England and Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

Laura's experience of financial crime and tax matters is of particular value when defending professionals before accounting and financial regulators, or registrants in any field facing accusations of financial impropriety.

Some recent examples of Laura's work include;

- Representing a doctor before the MPTS in proceedings relating to health and misconduct following dishonest self-prescribing of medication;
- The defence of a nurse in an 8-week NMC hearing involving the death of a patient following surgery in a private hospital;
- Cross-examination of a vulnerable complainant on behalf of a doctor in MPTS proceedings, following which an allegation of sexual assault was found not proved;
- Representing a doctor before the MPTS in respect of a number of drink-driving convictions. He was able to retain his registration.
- Representing a senior social worker accused of misleading the family court when acting as an independent expert witness.

Laura also prosecutes on behalf of the General Osteopathic Council in fitness to practice proceedings involving misconduct and clinical competence. She recently prosecuted the case of a well-known osteopathic academic who was struck off after findings that he had inappropriate sexual relations with a patient.

She has prosecuted at the National College of Teaching and Leadership (now TRA) in cases concerning

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misconduct and dishonesty, and involving the questioning of child witnesses. She has also presented cases on behalf of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and General Optical Council.

Laura's experience across coronial and criminal proceedings enables her to approach professional discipline cases in a holistic manner and seek pragmatic solutions for clients.

Public Prosecution

Laura is a Grade 3 Prosecutor. She has been instructed in cases involving assault, possession of offensive weapons, theft, and burglary. She recently prosecuted in a case of trespass with intent to commit a sexual offence, in which the defendant intended to rape the complainant and used a knife to threaten her.

Laura is developing a specialism in s.22 POCA applications: she is regularly instructed to pursue such applications on behalf of the CPS specialist asset recovery unit and has spoken at a CPS-led international prosecutors conference about these legally complex applications.

Prior to commencing pupillage at 2 Hare Court, Laura spent one year at the Crown Prosecution Service. She worked under the supervision of a Principal Crown Advocate and assisted with research and drafting in cases involving murder, manslaughter, complex fraud and rape.

Tax

Laura acts for HMRC both as a junior alone and led junior in tax appeals in the First-Tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber). She has been instructed by HMRC in cases concerning Missing Trader Intra-Community (MTIC) fraud, acquisition fraud, penalties and personal liability notices.

In a recent case, Laura acted as leading junior counsel, defending an appeal at the FTT. The appeal was presented by an experienced silk and involved reclaimed VAT in the sum of over £240k. This was a case of considerable complexity because the commodity traded was PPI leads, a commodity never before seen in Missing Trader/Acquisition frauds, and required the use of two experts. A close analysis of data protection law at the time of the transactions was also required. The appeal was dismissed after a two-week hearing; the Tribunal found that the appellant should have known his trading was connected with fraud and HMRC retained the sum in its entirety. Laura is now the leading barrister for HMRC in the PPI Data field given her success in this case and her knowledge of this unique, fast-paced market and associated data protection law.

Accreditations

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Appointments & Memberships

- CPS Advocate Panel Level 3
- Criminal Bar Association
- Association of Regulatory & Disciplinary Lawyers
- Young Fraud Lawyers Association

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