

Laura Stephenson



Year of Call: 2012

020 7353 5324

Laura Stephenson enjoys a diverse practice, specialising in crime, professional discipline, extradition and coroner's inquests.

She has gained a wide range of experience in the Crown Court and regularly acts for defendants at trial, sentence and in Proceeds of Crime Act hearings.

In addition to her criminal practice, Laura has a great deal of experience defending medical practitioners in professional discipline proceedings and appears before tribunals including the MPTS (GMC), NMC, GOsC, ACCA and RICS.

Criminal Defence

Laura enjoys a busy criminal practice. She defends in the Crown Court in cases involving a range of offences including supply of drugs, serious violence, robbery, sexual offences and fraud.

Laura has recently defended in the following cases:

R v PB

A robbery in which the complainant was rendered unconscious. Following Laura's cross-examination of the complainant, the prosecution conceded that the evidence against the defendant was insufficient to lead to a conviction and offered no further evidence in the case.

R v LD

Location

2 Hare Court
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Laura represented a man accused of assault occasioning grievous bodily harm in a domestic context. It was accepted that the defendant had caused significant injury to the complainant; the issue was whether the incident was accidental. The defendant was acquitted after a five-day trial.

R v AH

Laura represented one of eight individuals who had pleaded guilty to participating in a 'crash for cash' fraud. The case law on frauds of this nature recommends sentences of immediate custody in all but exceptional cases. Laura's client was one of only three defendants to receive a suspended sentence.

R v SN

A young woman was accused of wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm. It was alleged that she had used a glass as a weapon in fight, causing wounds to the complainant's face. The defendant raised self-defence and was acquitted.

R v LH

The defendant faced the unusual charge of attempt to cause serious injury by dangerous driving, as well as a charge of dangerous driving and witness intimidation. It was alleged that he had run over the complainant with his car and thereafter intimidated the complainant in an effort to obstruct the course of justice. The defendant was acquitted on all three counts.

Criminal Prosecution - Public

Laura is a Grade 2 Prosecutor. She has been instructed in cases involving assault, possession of offensive weapons, theft, and burglary. She regularly appears on behalf of the CPS when defendants are sentenced in the Crown Court. 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.

Prior to commencing third six pupillage at 2 Hare Court, Laura was a pupil 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. She also gained a wealth of experience in the magistrates' and youth court, prosecuting trials on a daily basis.

Extradition

Laura has developed a busy practice in extradition law. She has represented requested persons at first instance in the Magistrates' Court and before the High Court. She has acted in a wide range of extradition cases, including those involving prison conditions, the right to a family and private life, passage of time and proportionality. Laura also regularly prosecutes on behalf of the CPS in cases at first instance.

Laura recently prevented the removal of a Polish national sought on a European Arrest Warrant for international supply of drugs offences. She argued that it would be disproportionate for the person to be extradited on

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grounds of his private and family life, under Article 8 ECHR, primarily because of the likely effect of extradition on his son's well-being and education.

In *T v Hungary*, Laura successfully appealed against the extradition of a mother accused of grievous bodily harm. Laura argued that the District Judge had fallen into error and that extradition would cause unacceptable infringements on the Article 8 rights of the appellant and her children. The High Court found that the District Judge had erred in making findings at odds with the evidence in the case, and that compelling and exceptionally serious features meant the lower court should have refused to order extradition due to the appellant's mental condition and the risk of harm to her children.

Inquests & Public Inquiries

Laura is instructed in inquest proceedings, predominantly on behalf of healthcare practitioners. She represents doctors, nurses and care homes at inquests. Recent instructions include: acting on behalf of a doctor who performed an assessment on a patient shortly before the patient jumped from a multi-storey car park; representing a care home where a patient died with no DNAR in place and CPR was not performed; and acting for a nurse caring for a 7 year old child who died in a post-operative care.

Laura has experience of large-scale inquest and inquiry work. She is familiar with the issues that arise in lengthy cases involving vast amounts of evidence, including in the following cases:

Hillsborough Inquests - in 2012 the High Court ordered new inquests into to 96 deaths resulting from the Hillsborough Stadium Disaster. Laura worked with a team of Charles Russell Solicitors, instructed by the Football Association, for several months in 2013-14.

Independent Jersey Care Inquiry - the inquiry investigated the abuse of children in Jersey's care system over several decades. Laura was instructed by an interested party to the Inquiry as junior disclosure counsel.

Professional Discipline

Laura prosecutes and defends in a range of professional disciplinary settings, particularly specialising in healthcare matters. She is instructed to defend registrants before the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service, Nursing and Midwifery Council and Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in both preliminary and substantive hearings.

Laura also has experience of prosecuting before the General Osteopathic Council in fitness to practice proceedings involving misconduct and clinical incompetence. She has prosecuted at the National College of Teaching and Leadership in cases concerning sexual misconduct, dishonesty and involving questioning of child witnesses. She has presented cases on behalf of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

From an early stage of her professional discipline practice, Laura built up extensive experience of defending nurses in fitness to practice proceedings before the Nursing and Midwifery Council. She has represented nurses in cases involving allegations of clinical incompetence, sexual assault, falsification of records and theft. She has appeared in several long-running cases involving patient fatalities. In 2016 Laura undertook a two-month

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secondment at the legal headquarters of the Royal College of Nursing: she has detailed knowledge of healthcare disciplinary law.

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

Laura is instructed by the National College of Teaching and Leadership to present cases against teachers and has assisted solicitors instructed by the Department for Education with case preparation in governor barring proceedings.

Appointments & Memberships

- Criminal Bar Association
- Association of Regulatory & Disciplinary Lawyers
- Young Fraud Lawyers Association

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