

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 appears in the High Court, Court of Appeal and Crown Courts, 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 fraud.

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 and care homes.

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:

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Location

2 Hare Court
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Criminal Defence

Laura is instructed to defend in cases involving GBH with intent, rape, child sexual abuse, blackmail, kidnap, robbery, fraud, and drugs.

Laura has been instructed as sole counsel in a money laundering case with a value of over £2 million and is currently being led as a junior in a counterfeiting trial valued at over £5 million. She is skilled at managing the voluminous paperwork and extensive disclosure that often arises in such cases.

Laura has particular experience of representing vulnerable defendants and persons suffering from mental health difficulties who face alternative forms of trial or disposal.

Notable Cases:

R v May [2020] EWCA Crim 365

Represented 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 20 weeks, suspended for 2 years. 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 strangers 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]

Laura represented 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 F [2019]

Represented a youth accused of causing grievous bodily harm with intent, one of a group of five defendants accused of stabbing a man with samurai swords and knives.

R v D [2018]

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

R v A [2017]

Represented a young man accused of grooming and sexually assaulting his cousin, a child. Persistent disclosure requests produced counselling records that assisted the defendant's case. He was acquitted after a trial.

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Inquests & Public Inquiries

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

- 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 working experience of public enquiries and inquests; she worked on the preparation of evidence for parties involved in the Hillsborough Inquests and Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

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 at interim and final hearings. She also defends at the Nursing and Midwifery Council and Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

Some recent examples of Laura's work include;

- 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 the 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.

Early on in her practice Laura undertook a secondment at the legal headquarters of the Royal College of Nursing, developing detailed knowledge of healthcare disciplinary law from a very early stage in her career. She has appeared in several long-running MNC cases involving patient fatalities.

Laura 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,

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who was struck off after findings that he had inappropriate sexual relations with a patient.

She prosecuted at the National College of Teaching and Leadership (now TRA) in cases concerning misconduct and dishonesty, and involving questioning of child witnesses. She has also presented cases on behalf of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

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 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.

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. She also gained a wealth of experience in the magistrates' and youth court, prosecuting trials on a daily basis.

Tax

Laura acts for HMRC both as a junior alone and leading junior in tax appeals in the First-Tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber). She is instructed in a number of cases involving large-scale VAT frauds including Missing Trader Intra-Community (MTIC) frauds.

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. The written submissions in the case ran to well over 150-pages because of the amount of evidence required to prove the objective person ought to have known of a connection with VAT fraud. A close analysis of data protection law at the time of the transactions was 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.

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Accreditations



Appointments & Memberships

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

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