



Claire Matthews

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Claire Matthews works across the South-Eastern Circuit, with an exclusively criminal law practice. Her practice is almost equally divided between prosecuting and defending, and she is regularly instructed in cases of murder, manslaughter, serious child neglect/harm, and serious sexual assault/rape.

A Grade 4 and RASSO prosecutor, she is often selected in cases which involve expert evidence, complex third-party issues, and/or vulnerable witnesses, including a number of cases with a particular emphasis on infant death/serious injury/neglect.

She has defended cases of murder, attempted murder, and manslaughter as sole counsel, and works closely with her instructing solicitors to ensure clients with additional needs are looked after appropriately throughout the trial process.

For many years, she has prosecuted and defended parents/guardians in murder/manslaughter and s.5 cases including cases of alleged 'Shaken Baby Syndrome' and has a strong grasp and understanding of the medico-legal issues in such cases.

Expertise

Murder & Manslaughter

Claire is regularly instructed either as sole or junior counsel in cases of murder, manslaughter and s.5.

In recent years, she has dealt with infant death trials, murders in the context of drug dealing, and domestic murders.

Notable Murder & Manslaughter cases

R v Kane MITCHELL

Junior defence counsel in murder of 11 week old baby. Case concerned complex medical issues including the precise nature of the injuries, their likely timing, whether they were inflicted/accidental, and the force required. The trial also included a vast amount of bad character evidence setting the background of the relationship in which the child was living.

R v TYLER SMITH

Defended as sole counsel a man charged with the murder of a man he was said to be 'leaning on' to cook up drugs for him to sell on.

Case involved significant amounts of telephone, cell site and CCTV evidence, piecing together the timeline of events before, during and after the killing.

R v DAVIES

Junior prosecution counsel in murder trial, where defendant was convicted of manslaughter. Deceased was said to have tried to rob the defendant of a quantity of drugs he was preparing, and in the course of the alleged robbery the defendant stabbed him fatally.

Case entailed significant disclosure challenges including 12 phases of disclosure and issues of PII. The fact the defendant, complainant and witnesses had been involved in numerous other investigations meant meticulous consideration of what material ought to be disclosed to the defence to ensure fairness at all stages.

R v Cowey

sole defence counsel in murder where defendant pleaded guilty to killing his wife in multiple stabbing.

R v Woollard

defended as sole counsel man who pleaded guilty to the planned murder of his former son in law amid a custody battle.

Modern Slavery

Claire has many years' experience of handling the most serious and complex charges, and has undertaken a number of Modern Slavery Cases, receiving instructions from the Complex Crime Unit of the CPS.

Notable Modern Slavery cases

R v Slavik et al

Lead counsel for the Crown prosecuting a family charged with people trafficking and modern-day slavery offences in Slovakia and UK. Extradition proceedings, two UK trials and convictions against all 4 defendants, and subsequent POCA proceedings.

Sexual Offences

Claire has significant experience in defending and prosecuting allegations of serious sexual offences, including sexual assault, rape and the sexual abuse of a child.

A significant part of my caseload involves serious sexual allegations – whether prosecuting or defending.

Notable Sexual Offences cases

R v RH [press restrictions]

prosecuted man for campaign of rape and serious neglect of young child, resulting in extended sentence of 33 years imprisonment. Judge described case as 'worst of it's kind'. Received letter of thanks from the support worker of the complainant who I had spent considerable time with discussing the case and outcome.

R v DP

defended a young defendant with serious mental health condition facing multiple rape allegations against a family member. Judge commended both prosecution and defence counsel for their care and attention in this difficult case.

R v Castles

prosecuted a former teacher for sexual abuse against multiple former students. Engaged by CPS RASSO at an early stage to consider the form of the indictment and jurisdictional issues. Defendant entered guilty pleas and was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.

R v RH [press restrictions]

prosecuted man for campaign of rape and serious neglect of young child, resulting in extended sentence of 33 years imprisonment. Judge described case as 'worst of it's kind'. Received letter of thanks from the support worker of the complainant who I had spent considerable time with discussing the case and outcome.

R v R

defended 16 year old autistic defendant for 2 knife point stranger rapes in Peterborough, which led to a manhunt because of their gravity. Defendant unfit to plead, 'unique' package of medical issues, fully contested trial of act. Youngest defendant to receive s.41 Hospital Order at time of sentence. [Press restrictions prohibit naming]

Child Injury

Notable Child Injury cases

R v DB [press restrictions in place]

defended lead defendant in case alleging two counts contrary to s.5 DVCVA. Forensic cross examination of medical experts in fields of radiology, burns, bruising, and general paediatric medicine.

R v AM [press restrictions]

defended lead defendant in allegation of causing or allowing serious physical harm to a baby. Vulnerable client with

complex needs. Multiple medical experts cross-examined.

Memberships

- Criminal Bar Association

Awards

LEADING JUNIOR

Legal500

UNITED KINGDOM

2025



Chambers
TOP RANKED

**UK
Bar**

2024

Claire Matthews