Jane Bickerstaff KC

Head of Chambers

CALLED 1989
SILK 2012

"Jane is, I believe, one of the best criminal silks at the Bar for dealing with very sensitive and complex..."

CHAMBERS AND PARTNERS, 2027



Jane Bickerstaff KC is the Head of 9BR Chambers, a leading set of barrister's Chambers established in London over 70 years ago.

She is a first-class advocate who prosecutes and defends in all areas of serious crime. She has been instructed in complex fraud and financial crime, and has particular expertise in sexual offences.

Background and Expertise

As a criminal barrister, Jane owes her reputation to her abilities in cross-examination, particularly of children and vulnerable witnesses; to the way she builds trust with clients, the judiciary and juries; her methodical preparation; and her feel for the tactics of a case.

Prosecuting, she is regularly instructed by the Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Major Crime Unit, to prosecute murders and complex crime on the borders of the Metropolitan area.

Defending, she is regularly instructed privately by both professional and high-profile

defendants. Her expertise in sexual offences has seen her appear for the defence in a number of high-profile and complex historical allegations.

She regularly appears at the Central Criminal Court in cases of homicide.

Beyond her criminal practice, Jane has for many years appeared before police disciplinary boards, acting for regulated individuals – and continues this work as a KC. She sits for the FA and Sport resolutions as well as RFU and England Boxing.

In 2021 Jane was appointed to the Safeguarding Appeal Tribunal of the Gymnastics Ethics Foundation.

Notable Cases

Murder and Manslaughter

R v JD and LL, 2023

Defence of the mother of 1 year old child murdered by her abusive partner. Defendant was a very vulnerable adult, suffering from depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Cutthroat case as the co-defendant blamed the mother. This led to legal arguments as to character. Multiple medical experts were cross examined re brain/spine/bone/eye injuries and pathology.

Central Criminal Court

Red more on BBC News

R v HB, 2023

Defending a woman who stabbed and beheaded her brother whilst suffering from a severe psychotic episode. Successful defence of insanity, leading to not guilty verdict by reason of insanity.

Central Criminal Court

Read more:

- Metro
- BBC News
- Daily Mail

R v JS and SS, 2023

Defence of woman for the missing body murder of her stepfather. Evidence given by undercover officers who had been granted anonymity. Defendant suffering from multiple physical and mental health problems and granted intermediary for the whole of the trial. She suffered a break down in the middle of her evidence and was unable to complete it. Successfully argued that no adverse inference should be drawn.

Central Criminal Court

Read more:

- BBC News
- Sky News
- Independent

R v F, 2021

Defended a mother charged with murder of her severely disabled son. A plea was accepted to Manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility. The mother developed a mental disorder due to the strain of caring for her son with minimal help during lockdown. The judge said her son was "an indirect victim of interruption to normal life caused by the Covid-19 pandemic." The Defendant was sentenced to a hospital order with restriction under the Mental Health Act without a limit of time.

Central Criminal Court

News report here

R v DE, 2020-2021

Leading Tessa Shroff in baby shaking murder trial representing defendant with learning and cognitive difficulties.

St Albans Crown Court

New report here

R v W, 2020

Prosecution of a youth for the murder by stabbing of his drug dealer. Complicated sentencing exercise due to age of defendant.

Central Criminal Court

R v D, 2019

Prosecution of a woman for the manslaughter of her baby by shaking. As well as the usual difficult medical issues arising from shaken baby cases, this baby was 15 weeks premature, with attendant health problems. The defendant had an extremely low IQ and required an intermediary for the whole trial.

Reading Crown Court

R v L, 2019

Prosecution of a man for the murder of his partner. The murder was exceptionally violent and took place in his home address. He suffered for many years from depression and anxiety and ran the defence of manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility.

Central Criminal Court

Elize Stevens death: Man jailed for murdering partner - BBC News

R v C and others, 2019

Defence of a man for dangerous act manslaughter and aggravated burglary. In the course of an intrusion at knifepoint into the home of a drug dealer, in order to steal from him drugs/money, the victim escaped by jumping head first from a fourth floor window. He landed on concrete and died. The case involved extensive legal submissions on the law in this area.

Central Criminal Court

R v E and others, 2018

Prosecution of 5 teenage defendants for the joint enterprise murder by stabbing of another teenager. The incident was a retributive attack following a confrontation in the street between one of the defendants and the victim. The defendants all played different roles and although three were directly involved in the stabbing it was not possible to prove who delivered the fatal blow. The defendants advanced self defence. All involved in the stabbing were convicted of murder.

Central Criminal Court

R v K, 2018

Prosecution of female defendant for the murder of her sister. This was an astonishingly violent attack in the home address and in the presence of the victim's four young children. The motive was jealousy as the defendant was having an affair with her sister's husband. The defendant reported the offence to police and spun a false story of an intruder to the home having attacked her sister. The case involved meticulous investigation forensically, of mobile telephone messages and local CCTV to uncover the truth. The defendant then sought to run mental health defences but eventually pleaded guilty to murder at trial.

Central Criminal Court

R v D, 2018

Prosecution of 5 boys aged 14 and 15 years for the murder by stabbing of another 15 year old boy. The case was a true joint enterprise as the Crown could not prove who the stabber/stabbers were and the case involved piecing together large quantities of circumstantial and CCTV evidence. There were bad character applications re gang membership.

St Albans Crown Court

R v F, 2018

Defence of young defendant for murder of a 17 year old girl he had just met. He was said to have strangled her during the course of violent sexual activity. He then hid her body in his wardrobe where it decomposed before discovery, making ascertaining the precise cause of death very difficult. Case involved cross examining with great sensitivity and advancing very unattractive arguments to the court robustly yet sensitively.

Wolverhampton Crown Court

R v M, 2016

Successful defence, at Warwick Crown Court, of 21-year-old for stabbing his mother's abusive partner through the heart.

R v B and others, 2014

Prosecution of four teenagers for kicking to death a young man with mild learning disabilities in a Peterborough underpass. This case involved extensive issues of joint enterprise, where there only one fatal blow.

Cambridge Crown Court

R v CW

Jane defended a vulnerable defendant with autistic spectrum disorder and depression, accused of the murder of his four-year-old daughter.

St Albans Crown Court

R v R, R and others

Jane successfully prosecuted this four-handed murder of an elderly man during a planned robbery at his home.

Luton Crown Court

R v C and others

Successful defence, at Central Criminal Court, of a teenager accused of being part of a gang-related stabbing to death of another teen gang member in east London. Fought off sustained cut-throat defence from another accused.

R v T and others

Prosecution of double murder case amounting to gangland executions on the street in North London. The defendants were dangerous criminals and there was a background of large-scale drug dealing, armed robbery and extortion. Central Criminal Court.

Link to BBC article

Murder and Manslaughter

Rape and Sexual Offences

R v SN

Defence of man for rape and sexual offences against his neighbour said to have taken place within the Jehovas Witness community. Alleged that sexual intercourse had been consensual and both had motive to lie because of the repercussions within the community. Private instruction.

Reading Crown court

R v C, 2020

Defending a French National charged with rape. Offence had allegedly taken place in front of the young children of the defendant and the complainant. Acquitted.

Stafford Crown Court

R v E, 2019

Defence of a pharmacist for alleged sexual assaults on the Saturday Girl who worked in his chemist. She was a vulnerable witness, suffering from mental health issues. There was an abuse of process argument over lost/missing CCTV evidence. Defendant acquitted.

Northampton Crown Court

R v J, 2019

Defence of a man now in his seventies for rape and serious sexual offences against two foster daughters during the eighties and nineties. The case involved analysis of large quantities of social care records which demonstrated significant failings in the recollections and assertions of the witnesses. The complexity of the case was increased as the defendant admitted in police interview to some sexual conduct with one of the complainants but only by consent and when she had reached the age of sixteen. He was jointly charged with his wife who faced child cruelty allegations. The case involved cross examining with some sensitivity extremely damaged adults who had suffered physical and mental health issues as an alleged result of the abuse they complained of.

Aylesbury Crown Court

R v S, 2018

Defence of a church pastor for the repeated rape and sexual assault of his 11 year old daughter. The witness made timely complaint and was only 12 years when she gave evidence. The case involved full use of vulnerable witness protocol including submission of questions for cross examination in writing.

Snaresbrook Crown Court

R v K and N, 2018

Defence of Imam, now in his eighties, for rape and historical sexual offences alleged by 7 cousins. K was suffering from advanced dementia and was found unfit to stand trial so his trial of issue took

place alongside the trial of one of his female devotees. It was necessary to cross-examine all the complainants and other witnesses as to bad character without the benefit of proper instructions.

Leicester Crown Court

R v D, 2018

Defence of a man for rape and serious sexual offences alleged by his teenage step daughter. The complainant had psychological problems and had undergone counselling. There were issues with third party disclosure. There were many prosecution witnesses as all family members had turned against the defendant. Many of these had to be argued out as inadmissible.

Croydon Crown Court

R v P, 2017

Defence of a man in later life and suffering intellectual impairment for historical sexual offences against a family member. English was not his first language. He was granted an intermediary for the entirety of the trial. This is extremely rare and demonstrated the severity of his difficulties. Examination in chief had to be pre-prepared in writing and legal argument about appropriate directions in summing up such a case.

Kingston Crown Court

R v M and others, 2016

Successful defence of university student accused of taking part in the gang rape a woman at a college ball at the Royal Agricultural University.

Gloucester Crown Court

R v W, 2014-15

Defence of a former headmaster, aged 84 at trial, charged with offences of the utmost seriousness: sexual abuse and breach of trust against many former pupils. Allegations dated to 1959–71. Barely any records existed and there was an extensive abuse of process argument. Previous allegations had been stayed in 2003, but admitted as bad character evidence. Defendant was convicted on retrial after a hung jury at first trial. Extensive argument before the Court of Appeal on the above issues and on sentence.

Achievements

Memberships

- Criminal Bar Association
- Association of Regulatory and Disciplinary Lawyers

Appointments

- FA Judicial Panel, appointed 2018
- Legal Chair of specialist panels for Sport Resolutions – Appointed 2019
- Safeguarding Appeal Tribunal of the Gymnastics Ethics Foundation - Appointed 2021

Activities and Interests

- Jane is Head of Pupillage at 9BR Chambers, and runs the in-house advocacy training programme
- Outside of work she enjoys good food and is a passionate supporter of Everton Football Club

Recognition

"Jane is always very good." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Jane is, I believe, one of the best criminal silks at the Bar for dealing with very sensitive and complex matters in general crime." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Jane is quite low-key, but a really hard worker and very popular with her juniors." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Jane has a really engaging and unpretentious manner with judges and juries; they trust her." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Jane's style in court is very measured. She's calm and persuasive in how she prepares and delivers her cases." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Her tactics and advocacy are exemplary. She is truly top-notch." **Legal 500, 2026**

"Bickerstaff has an amazing ability to spot weaknesses and argue legal matters." **Chambers and Partners, 2026**

"Jane achieves excellent result for her clients." **Legal 500, 2026**

"Jane is a phenomenally experienced advocate working on the most serious cases. She fights passionately." **Legal 500, 2025**

"She is fantastic. She has really persuasive and charming advocacy and is fantastic in conference." **Chambers and Partners, 2025**

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"A very straightforward, jury-friendly advocate. Her no nonsense approach allows her to cut to the chase." **Chambers and Partners, 2024**

"Juries really seem to respond well to Jane’s no-nonsense approach. She is hard-working and effective." **Legal 500, 2024**

"She's really friendly with clients and her advocacy is brilliant." **Chambers and Partners, 2024**

"Attacks every case with gusto and makes good, logical decisions. She is simply exceptional." **Chambers and Partners, 2023**

"Jane is a persuasive and determined advocate who will defend the client to the hilt, invariably with enormous success." **Legal 500, 2023**