

Lara McCaffrey

Call to Bar: 2011



Lara is a capable and diligent junior known for her excellent writing skills, analytical mind and meticulous attention to detail. Her ability to master voluminous material with ease and precision means that she is regularly instructed in paper heavy cases. She is quick to dissect complex information, identify the key issues and present them in a clear and succinct way. Lara is currently acting as junior counsel to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and the Manchester Arena Bombing Inquiry, where she has been described as **“an asset”** and **“a star...her work is of the very highest quality.”** She is commended in particular for her drafting skills and efficiency; **“she has been given a lot to do, with tight deadlines, and has consistently delivered a high standard of work.”**

Lara successfully completed her pupillage at 25 Bedford Row in London, where she became a tenant in 2016 before moving to Lincoln House Chambers in 2017. Her practice involved work across all areas of criminal defence, with a particular focus on violent crime and cases involving vulnerable witnesses. Shortly after gaining tenancy, Lara was instructed as junior counsel to represent the principal in a multi-million pound conspiracy to supply Class A drugs. The case was regarded as one of the most complex and significant investigations into serious organised crime in Northern England. It covered some 250,000 telephone calls spanning a sixteen month investigation, in which nineteen defendants were arrested. Lara was responsible for detailed analysis of cell site evidence and co-location of telephones, along with crucial aspects of disclosure and witness anonymity. She was also instructed as a led junior in a murder case which involved complex issues of causation, substantial legal argument and forensic analysis of pathological evidence.

Lara previously worked for the Prisoners’ Advice Service, where she was responsible for advising clients on issues such as parole, categorisation, adjudications and appeals to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. She gained extensive experience as a County Court Advocate on the South Eastern circuit, appearing on behalf of litigants in over 1,650 hearings in the County Courts, the High Court, and in the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

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Practice areas:

Inquest & Inquiry

Criminal law

Professional appointments:

Criminal Bar Association

Young Legal Aid Lawyers

Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn

She was instructed by numerous firms of solicitors to deal with a broad spectrum of civil matters including case management hearings, residential and commercial landlord and tenant disputes, applications for summary judgment, bankruptcy proceedings, appeals and small claims trials. Lara was ratified by the Free Representation Unit to represent clients in the Employment Tribunal and trained at the National Centre for Domestic Violence, where she handled sensitive cases involving victims of abuse.

INQUEST & INQUIRY WORK

Notable Cases

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

Lara was instructed as junior counsel to the Anglican Church investigation. The first phase of the investigation consisted of two case studies:

- a. The Diocese of Chichester, where multiple allegations of child sexual abuse have been made;
- b. Peter Ball, the former Bishop of Gloucester who was convicted of child sexual abuse offences in 2015. The second phase of the investigation considered the extent to which the wider Church of England and the Church in Wales historically protected children from sexual abuse. It also explored the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements.

The Anglican Church investigation included 88,876 pages of disclosed material, six preliminary hearings and three substantive hearings between March 2018 and July 2019. Lara took a leading role in the review of disclosed material and supervised the redaction process. She was responsible for drafting Rule 9 statement requests and assisted with preparation for the public hearings, which she attended as junior counsel.

The first Anglican Church investigation report was published in May 2019, with a second report published in September 2020. Lara was heavily involved in the drafting and editing of both reports, as well as the warning letter process under Rule 13 of the Inquiry Rules 2006. The published reports can be found here: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/investigation/anglican-chichester-peter-ball>.

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Lara was instructed as junior counsel to the Manchester Arena Inquiry, which was set up to investigate the deaths of the victims of the 2017 terrorist attack. She was involved in the work of this Inquiry for three years, during which time she was responsible for a wide range of matters. These included the review of medical expert evidence and CCTV footage, preparation of reports, compilation of witness lists and drafting of Rule 9 statement requests. Lara worked on the analysis of the security arrangements within and outside the Arena, the experiences of each person who died (including when and where they died, and their survivability) and intelligence relating to the radicalisation of Salman Abedi. She was heavily involved in the Inquiry's examination of the emergency response to the bombing. This strand of the Inquiry investigated the inter-agency planning and preparation for responding to mass casualty incidents, the decision-making of the police, fire and ambulance services, and whether any inadequacies in the response contributed to the loss of life.

Inquiry Into The Death Of Jermaine Baker

The Inquiry investigated the circumstances of the death of Jermaine Baker, who was killed during a pre-planned firearms operation by the Metropolitan Police Service on 11th December 2015. Lara was instructed to conduct the preparation for the Inquiry hearings. This involved the analysis of a large volume of material and the examination of issues such as strategic and tactical planning, reliability and transmission of information, command and control, post-incident procedures, and the training and competency of the deployed firearms officers.

Brook House Inquiry

The Inquiry investigated the torture, inhuman or degrading treatment of individuals who were detained at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre, as shown in the BBC Panorama programme 'Undercover: Britain's Immigration Secrets.' It examined the methods, policies, practices and procedures that caused or contributed to any mistreatment, along with the adequacy of the complaints and monitoring mechanisms provided by Home Office Immigration Enforcement and external bodies. Lara reviewed the evidence and prepared the Rule 9 witness questions for members of the senior management team at Brook House. This included a close analysis of their decisions, actions and the circumstances surrounding the mistreatment of detainees.

CRIMINAL LAW

Notable Cases

"Operation Petral" – Lara was instructed as junior counsel to represent the principal in a multi-million pound conspiracy to supply Class A drugs. The case is regarded as one of the most complex and significant investigations into serious organised crime in Northern England. It covers some 250,000 telephone calls spanning a sixteen month investigation in which nineteen defendants were arrested. Lara has been responsible for detailed analysis of cell site evidence and co-location of telephones along with crucial aspects of disclosure and witness anonymity.

R v G – The defendant faced trial for murder. Lara was instructed as Junior Counsel to Queen's Counsel. The matter involved complex issues of causation, substantial legal argument and forensic analysis of pathological evidence.

R v H – Lara represented a defendant in the Crown Court on charges of dwelling burglary and high value theft. The defendant had fourteen previous convictions for similar offences and was advised to expect a sentence after conviction in the region of five years' custody. At trial, Lara successfully applied to exclude the key identification evidence under section 78 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The Crown subsequently offered no evidence and the jury was directed to acquit on both counts.

R v L – Multi-handed conspiracy to commit fraud by false representation involving ten defendants, all but one of whom pleaded guilty on the full facts of the conspiracy. Lara negotiated a basis of plea to the substantive offence only and was able to significantly restrict the defendant's financial benefit.

R v M – Successfully resisted application to appoint an enforcement receiver on a conspiracy to import £4 billion of cocaine.

R v W – The defendant stood trial on an indictment alleging three breaches of a restraining order. After cross-examination of the Crown's witnesses, Lara made a successful half-time submission and secured acquittals on all three counts.

R v B – Defendant with an extensive criminal record appealed his sentence of 20 weeks immediate custody for domestic assault. The appeal court both halved and suspended his term of imprisonment.

R v B – Defendant appealed her conviction for section 4 public order in which the Crown relied on an audio recording of threats made to the complainant. The appeal court quashed the conviction following legal submissions on the ingredients of the offence and the Crown's failure to prove the requisite intent.

R v N – Defendant stood trial on a domestic violence charge. Through legal argument, Lara was able to exclude the key evidence of a prosecution witness and a 999 call recording. The defendant was acquitted. Lara then successfully resisted the Crown's application for a restraining order and secured a defendant's costs order.

Name Surname

R v W – Defendant charged with assaulting three police officers. He was acquitted after cross-examination of the officers on their failure to fulfil their pre-search obligations under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

R v L – A postman faced sentence for theft of packages during the course of his employment, an offence which carried a starting point of 18 weeks immediate custody as a gross breach of trust. Lara made submissions as to what constitutes a high degree of trust along with a lengthy plea in personal mitigation. The defendant avoided both immediate and suspended imprisonment and was sentenced to 150 hours of unpaid work.

R v O – Trial on driving charge involving expert medical evidence. The defendant was acquitted following cross-examination of two police officers and successful legal arguments on admissibility. **R v H** – Defendant pleaded guilty to driving a vehicle at 91mph in a 50mph zone. Lara persuaded the court to take an exceptional approach by avoiding immediate disqualification, instead imposing 6 points on his licence

LINCOLN HOUSE CHAMBERS