



Sarah Magill

Call 2016

Sarah Magill appears in the most serious cases including terrorism, murder and complex fatalities.

Sarah has particular expertise in technical matters involving large-scale organised crime, importation and excise evasion, fraud and cases involving issues of capacity, abuses of trust, Wills and property. She also conducts specialist regulatory matters, licensing matters and election interference cases.

Sarah is a military specialist, appearing regularly in the Court Martial and the civilian courts representing service personnel. Sarah sits part-time as a Military Judge having been appointed to the role of Deputy Assistant Judge Advocate General in 2025.

She also runs a hostile region evacuation and resettlement charity that she started in 2021 and is the Northern Circuit's Treasurer.

Instructed in regulatory cases including health and safety, and licensing matters including firearms and license appeals brought by commercial animal breeders, Sarah acts for and against licensing and prosecutorial authorities and on behalf of insured and private parties. Sarah acts in cases in Wales and England and is conversant with devolved Welsh licensing legislation.

Described as “knowledgeable, warm but assertive when needed” with clients and “articulate and fearless” in court, she impresses “with her command of detail and with her obviously high level of skill at deciding the really important points to go at. She is also clearly someone who knows what is right and is prepared to stand her ground.”

Practice Areas

Crime

Notable Cases

Operation Advance [2025] – Preston Crown Court; Conspiracy to Supply Cocaine and Heroin. Prosecuting, Sarah led Holly Nelson in the prosecution of fifteen defendants for drugs offences following an investigation by Lancashire CID into a lengthy drug enterprise run from inside HMP Manchester. The case was **widely publicised** with the antics of a parrot reading out drug prices featured in a video found on a defendant's phone going viral. The case involved sensitive elements including the use of children as drug runners, one of whom was filmed being stabbed. All defendants were convicted.

R v JB and MT [2025] – Manchester Crown Court; Gross Negligence Manslaughter and ‘being the person in charge of a dog dangerously out of control where death is caused’. Defending, Sarah was led by Andrew Thomas KC, case was widely reported and involved the prosecution of parents over the death of their infant. Acquitted of gross negligence manslaughter.

R v AM [2024] – Preston Crown Court; s.3 Explosive Substances Act 1883. Prosecution junior. Defendant had viable improvised explosive device (nail bomb) improvised explosive device disguised as a firearm (pipe-type bomb), imitation firearm and knife.

R v W [2024] – Preston Crown Court; Murder. Defence junior. Defendant murdered, disembowelled and decapitated his neighbour and then distributed his remains throughout a large geographical area.

Operation Brick [2024] – Burnley Crown Court; conspiracy to supply cocaine. Prosecuted alone; six defendants had engaged in a professional ‘deliveroo’ type cocaine dealing throughout Lancashire for just under one year. All convicted.

R v A [2024] – Preston Crown Court; arson with intent to endanger life. Defended lay-client alleged to have been involved in a fire attack on a terraced domestic premises while a person was inside the house. The crown offered no evidence following cross-examination of the complainant on identification. Defendant acquitted before half-time and released from custody immediately.

R v A, P and B [2024] – Manchester Crown Court; represented defendant accused of firearms possession; question of antiquity. Advanced two limbs of legal argument denying possession and raising antiquity; crown offered no evidence.

R v HR [2023] – Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court; trial for death by dangerous driving. Defended alone one of two defendants prosecuted for causing the death of a 16 year old pedestrian, a school girl walking to college. The case post-dated the amendment to the maximum sentence for this offence to life.

Operations Quebec and Quebec 2 [2023] – Preston Crown Court; junior alone in the prosecution of multi-handed Operation Quebec and then led junior in the larger more expansive Operation Quebec 2. The prosecutions involved conspiracy to supply class A from Liverpool to Blackpool and elsewhere. All defendants in Operation Quebec were convicted and out of 28 defendants in Operation Quebec 2, 25 were convicted.

Operation Valetta [2023] – Burnley Crown Court; prosecuted series of exposure attacks involving a predatory male targeting female care home staff at night over nine months. Convicted on all counts.

R v BX [2023] – Preston Crown Court; defendant prosecuted for possession of imitation firearm used to threaten; guilty plea entered on a basis that enabled him to avoid an immediate prison sentence and keep his business.

Operation Marley [2023] – Preston Crown Court; defendant prosecuted for possession of multiple firearms and relevant ammunition with intent to endanger life. Not guilty verdicts recorded and defendant convicted of lesser offence whereby liberty was retained.

R v D [2023] – Preston Crown Court; defended medical professional accused of rape and violent attacks against three separate female complainants. After advancing legal argument the Crown abandoned one complainant and continued to trial in respect of the remaining two. Acquitted of every allegation made by the three women.

R v J [2023] – Manchester Crown Court at Minshull Street – rape, controlling and coercive behaviour and ABH. Marital allegations against spouse. Acquitted of rape and s.47 ABH, hung jury on coercive and controlling behaviour; no retrial.

Operation Adelite [2021] – Manchester Crown Court; Defence junior in ten-handed conspiracy to murder trial involving drill lyrics. Adduced voluminous defence evidence including music. Relied upon expert in drill. Jury acquitted client of conspiracy to murder, convicted instead of conspiracy to cause GBH.

Manchester Arena bombing; Operation Mantaline [2019] – Manchester Crown Court – prosecuted five terror suspects including one in absence for conspiracy to supply class A, offences discovered during the investigation of the arena bombing during the Ariana Grande concert. Later reported within the Inquiry proceedings.

R v GH [2017] – Carlisle Crown Court; causing serious injury by dangerous driving. Prosecuted HGV driver who did not pay attention to any overhead warning signs and drove into queue of stationary traffic, causing lifelong disabilities and life-limiting injuries to several people.

R v Hamilton [2016] EWCA Crim 78; Conveying articles into prison (cocaine) – this case is the authority for how to sentence conveyance of drugs into prison. Successfully reduced Ms Hamilton’s sentence by half.

Military Law

Notable Cases

R v Capt X [2025] – Catterick Military Court Centre; Sexual Assault – defending, Sarah led Kimberly Obrusik in the retrial of a British Army officer prosecuted for sexually assaulting a fellow officer during the pandemic. The case involved the introduction of defence jury bundle evidence and the calling of defence witnesses, following which the defendant was acquitted.

R v Major A [2024] – Catterick; multi-count indictment including assault. Adduced sensitive evidence from very senior military officers to achieve satisfactory outcome for officer (loss of seniority).

R v WO1 [2023] B – Catterick; multi-count indictment including assaults and public order act offences. Client received extremely favourable outcome with plea accepted to lesser alternative offence. Reduced by one rank.

Sarah accepts instructions in respect of Service Complaints, AGAI 67 proceedings, inquests and inquiries, including sensitive matters.

Regulatory, Inquests, Inquiries and Licensing

Notable cases

Part of the junior team instructed on the **Covid Inquiry** for the Health and Safety Executive.

Instructed off-panel by HMG in a particularly sensitive inquiry involving **international reciprocal agreements**.

Inquest touching on the death of a prisoner; Stafford, represented the family in a death in custody case where the cause of death was the consumption of novel psychoactive substances ('spice').

Animal Protection Society v M. et al [2022] – Preston Crown Court; Advanced detailed legal argument that had the effect of terminating the prosecution. The case was the beginning of the demise of both the charity and the solicitors' firm, the prosecution were robustly criticised and the case received widespread media attention together with the cases that followed it.

Cumberland County Council v BN [2024] – Carlisle Crown Court – represented director prosecuted for offences parasitic to an insolvent company. Put forward legal argument. Dishonesty offences withdrawn, director pleaded guilty to remainder, received a fine.

Sarah is selected to act in cases involving commercial animal breeders challenging local authority decisions in respect of licensing.

Firearms Licensing; Sarah appears both for police forces and private clients in licensing appeals.

Publications

Panels

- Serious Crime – level 4
- General Crime – level 4
- Counter Terror – level 3
- Specialist – Fraud – level 3

Regulatory Boards

- The Health and Safety Executive
- Coal Board
- Environment Agency
- Office of Rail and Road
- National Resources Wales
- Care Quality Commission
- The Office for Product Safety and Standards

Memberships

- Association of Military Court Advocates
- Criminal Bar Association
- Health and Safety Lawyers' Association
- Northern Circuit

- Middle Temple

Directory Quotes

- “Sarah is a joy to instruct as she is great with clients, fastidious in her preparation of all matters, and responsive. She is authoritative without a hint of arrogance, extremely well-prepared for any eventuality, and clearly enjoys advocacy” – **Legal 500, 2025**
- “An excellent barrister who is both passionate and realistic, Sarah has a fantastic rapport with the clients and always goes the extra mile.” – **Chambers & Partners, 2025 (Crime)**
- “Her advocacy skills are exceptional and she can connect with the jury, presenting compelling and intuitive arguments.” – **Chambers & Partners, 2025 (Crime)**
- “Clients appreciate Sarah for her fierce nature and her communication.” – **Chambers & Partners, 2025 (Crime)**