

Cassie Williams

Head of our regulatory and professional discipline team, specialising in fire safety. A popular choice for regulatory matters in the criminal courts.

Clerk: Wayne Digby

w.digby@bankhousechambers.co.uk

T 0114 275 1223

Overview

Cassie heads up our regulatory and professional discipline team, and has a particular specialism in fire safety.

Her early practice was in mixed common law, with an emphasis on crime, where her excellent client care meant that she was often instructed to represent vulnerable defendants. Her background of strong advocacy and in jury trials makes her a popular choice for regulatory matters in the criminal courts.

In 2017, the Minister for Education appointed Cassie to chair a panel of legal employers with a view to developing the new legal T Level, an alternative to A Levels for young people aged 16-18. Cassie strongly believes that the legal profession should be open to talented individuals from all backgrounds.

She lectures and delivers workshops on leadership and career development, with a particular emphasis on women and how to overcome the obstacles they face. Her feedback from this work is always superb: *“Very genuine, inspiring presentation”*; *“Will inspire me to go for things I wouldn’t usually go for... will help me make better choices in the future and have more confidence in myself as a woman”*.

Regulatory & public law

Cassie offers a cradle-to-grave service advising on cases, drafting charges, and attending from the first hearing at the magistrates’ court to trials and appeals.

She has particular experience in prosecuting or defending fire safety cases. She is regularly instructed by fire authorities and was junior counsel in the largest fire safety prosecution by the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority, where she secured custodial sentences for the lead defendants. She also defends in fire safety cases, and often advises companies and individuals during the investigation stage.

Cassie is available for other matters including:

- professional disciplinary matters
- inquests
- environmental prosecutions

Called: 2002

Appointments:

Independent member of the Parole Board
Chair of the Legal T level
Bar Standards Board external examiner
Civil litigation paper scrutiniser for the Bar Standards Board

- rail prosecutions
- licensing matters

Cassie has been a member of the Parole Board since 2016, chairing oral hearings and undertaking single-member paper hearings. Alongside that work, she sits on Parole Board committees to assist with the development of their work and their assessments of research applications.

Significant Cases

Regulatory & public law

GMFRA v Raviv Dozetis, Bolton Magistrates' Court (appeal at Crown Court) – Prosecuting the landlord of a house in multiple occupation (HMO), containing 9 flats, under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Offences included self-closing devices removed; smoke detectors covered; emergency lighting not working; no risk assessment. Fined a total of £10,000. Defendant appealed and there was a full hearing including detailed examination of accounts and other financial evidence. Appeal refused.

GMFRA v Armstrongs Environmental Services, Bolton Magistrates' Court – Prosecuting a recycling centre under the Greater Manchester Act 1981. The prosecution concerned the size of wood stacks on the recycling premises. Fires had occurred and the fire service had spent hundreds of thousands of pounds fighting the fires over a number of days. There was huge public interest given the public money spent. The company argued abuse of process but eventually pleaded guilty.

GMFRA v Waraich/R v Waraich & Hussain, Manchester Magistrates' Court (first prosecution), Manchester Crown Court (second prosecution) – Initially prosecuted this defendant landlord in 2012, a joint prosecution alongside Manchester Council. The defendant was fined just over £9,000 for 8 fire safety offences and 21 housing offences. Then commenced a prosecution in 2014 of the same defendant and a further defendant, concluding 9 months later. The co-accused was the woman who completed the fire risk assessment for one of Mr Waraich's properties. There have not been many prosecutions of fire risk assessors, so there was considerable interest in the case. The defendant pleaded guilty at the Crown Court. She had stopped offering her services as a risk assessor by that time. She was sentenced to 140 hours' unpaid work and had to make a contribution to costs. Waraich was eventually sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment, suspended for 2 years with 200 hours' unpaid work. He also had to pay over £18,000 prosecution costs.

R v Wali Yaqub and others, Manchester Crown Court – Junior counsel in the biggest prosecution by GMFRA to date, against the owners and staff of the Oasis Lounge shisha bar in Manchester for running a blatant fire trap. There were several defendants, with one turning Queen's Evidence during the trial. Convicted after a 3-week trial with sentences ranging from immediate custody to community orders. POCA proceedings also brought. The lounge has since been torn down after Manchester City Council bosses obtained an order under the Building Act.

Merseyside Fire Authority investigation into X Co – Asked to advise a national multi-million pound company shortly after a fire at one of its properties, with an investigation following. A prosecution could have been catastrophic, affecting 6 of their buildings and risking their government contracts and safety rating. Attended meetings in person and via telephone, and represented them at a meeting with the fire safety officers and their solicitor. Provided written advice covering their dealings with the fire service, appeals and judicial review, risk assessments and future safety arrangements. No further action was taken against the company.

GMFRA v Phelps, Bury and Rochdale Magistrates' Court – Prosecuted a firework seller for failing to have a licence to store the explosives under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. He was sentenced to 18 weeks in custody suspended for 1 year, with 200 hours' unpaid work and a 15-day rehabilitation activity. He was also ordered to pay towards the costs of prosecution.

WYFRA v Wakefield Grammar School and Dr Gibson, Leeds Crown Court – Prosecuting an independent school for children aged 3 to 18 and their fire risk assessor for breaches of the fire safety order, including failing to have a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment across all their sites. Acted from the investigation stage through to sentencing.

WYFRA v Trinity Developments Ltd, Niche Homes Ltd and APP Construction Ltd, Leeds Crown Court – Successful prosecution of 3 companies involved in fire safety breaches at student accommodation in Leeds. This included prosecution of the construction company which handed over some of the student flats for occupation when fire safety measures were not in place, thereby putting them at risk of death or serious injury.

Further information

How much will Cassie Williams' services cost?

Cassie mostly works on a fixed-fee basis for the main hearing, with a daily refresher rate for any subsequent date of hearing, although this depends on the type of work you request. If you'd like a quotation for her legal services in a particular matter, please contact our clerk using the details below and we'll be very happy to help. Please also refer to Bank House Chambers' standard terms & conditions.

What might influence the timescales of the services Cassie offers?

Cassie would normally expect to arrange a preliminary conference with your client within 7 days of first contact from you. After that, despite our best intentions, we can't always control timescales or the amount of time we spend on a case. These can be affected by factors such as urgency; complexity; your own (or your client's) availability; Cassie's availability and that of any third parties; the volume of documents she needs to review or must request; and the court's availability.

Can you have confidence in Cassie's work?

She is regulated by the Bar Standards Board.

How can you contact Cassie Williams?

In the first instance, please contact our senior clerk, Wayne Digby, on 0114 275 1223 or email him at w.digby@bankhousechambers.co.uk.

**BANK HOUSE
CHAMBERS** 18
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info@bankhouse.law

0114 2751223