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Caroline Rees KC

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Practice Overview

Caroline Rees KC leads the successful criminal team at 30 Park Place. As a junior, Caroline maintained a busy practice prosecuting and defending in the full range of serious criminal cases. She acquired a particular expertise in cases involving rape and other serious sexual offences, including historical offences and cases with multiple complainants. She handled a large volume of cases involving vulnerable witnesses requiring significant adjustments to facilitate participation in the trial process. As a junior she gained extensive experience in advocacy involving the vulnerable and was one of the advocacy trainers involved in the roll-out of specialist training on Circuit. Caroline was also regularly instructed in cases involving modern slavery and human trafficking in the context of sexual offending and drugs supply.

Since taking Silk in 2018, Caroline has been in high demand by both Prosecution and Defence as one of the leading advocates on the Wales and Chester Circuit. She continues to maintain her expertise in relation to cases involving rape and serious sexual offences so that she remains the “go to” counsel for this category of work. Caroline has also secured an outstanding reputation arising from her work in homicide cases. In recent years she has appeared as Leading Counsel in the highest profile cases which have attracted national media attention. Caroline was instructed as leading counsel for the Prosecution in many high profile trials arising from the killing of children by their carers and/ or parents during the time of Covid restrictions, including the murder of Logan Mwangi in Bridgend, the murder of Lola James in Haverfordwest and the manslaughter by gross negligence of Kaylea Titord in Newtown. She also appeared as Leading defence counsel in R v OA where a mother who had suffered from paranoid schizophrenia was tried for the manslaughter of her young child during the Covid lockdown in 2020.

Caroline’s practice in Silk has also included trials arising out of large scale police operations for drugs supply and the activities of organised groups, including cases involving modern slavery. She has also appeared in trials for offences of high value frauds.

Caroline is the current Leader of the Wales and Chester Circuit, the first woman to be elected to that post. She sits as a Recorder of the Crown Court and is authorised to try cases involving serious sexual offences. Caroline also sits as the Legal Chair of the Mental Health Review Tribunal Wales (Restricted Patient Panel). Caroline is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar and was the Founding Chair of the Wales and Chester Circuit Women’s Forum. Caroline also played an integral part in the launch of Women in Criminal Law Wales in March 2023 and is a regular speaker or panel member at events to support women in the legal profession. She also undertakes extensive outreach work promoting social mobility and access to the Bar as a profession.

Notable and Reported cases

- Serious sexual offences



R v G (P) and G (A) [2018] Cardiff Crown Court: Leading counsel for the Prosecution in trial of a husband and wife described as the “Fred and Rose West of Barry” for the historical rape and other serious sexual offences against a number of vulnerable young women who had been groomed into sexual activity by the Defendants. The trial involved issues of grooming and manipulation of young teenagers together with issues of lawful consent.

R v JW and others (Operation Swan) – 6 week trial. Leading junior counsel in large scale prosecution of multiple defendants for historic offences of serious sexual abuse against multiple complainants within a familial context. Allegations spanned 20 years and a number of generations and reflected changes in legislation relating to sexual offences, Included a number of vulnerable witnesses requiring various special measures, including use of intermediaries. Complex issues of disclosure.

R v AS – defence counsel. 16 year old Defendant. Allegation of rape upon a mentally vulnerable adult. Defendant also vulnerable with various behavioural disorders. Trial conducted via use of intermediaries and appropriate trial procedures for young defendant.

R v CN – Prosecution counsel. Historical sexual allegations within a familial context spanning the change of legislation relating to sexual offences. Multiple victims. Defendant had admitted incestuous conduct but denied non consensual offending – trial concerned issue of consent with young victims in a close familial context. Trial involved extremely sensitive recorded footage of offending which had to be presented as part of the evidence.

R v NW – Prosecution counsel. Defendant was a convicted sex offender who made a complaint that he had been victim of familial sexual abuse. In course of his complaint, he disclosed a large volume of previous serious sexual offending by him upon multiple victims, including babies. Complex indictment and significant issues of disclosure.

R v RJ – prosecution counsel. Defendant had raped multiple victims, all of whom were sex workers. Victims were distrustful of the court process and were vulnerable. Case involved working closely with the Crown Prosecution Service, police and “Streetlife” (outreach team working on the street with sex workers).

R v CD – defence counsel. Trial concerned allegations of historical sexual abuse within familial context. Multiple victims, including vulnerable and young witnesses who required a careful approach in cross examination within current guidance as to best practice.

R v LI and JO (Operation Crimson) – prosecution counsel. Defendants had trafficked two women into the UK from Nigeria and into prostitution. Victims had been subjected to “JuJu” ceremonies to ensure their compliance with the Defendants’ demands. Evidence included expert evidence on the cultural background of the victims in Nigeria and, in particular, the force of the JuJu ceremony. Victims extremely vulnerable and frightened of the court process. Complex evidence regarding financial transfers within and outside the UK. Case also involved Proceeds of Crime Act proceedings in relation to controlling prostitution.

R v LW – prosecution counsel. Trial of allegation of historical sexual abuse by brother upon sister. Trial involved analysis and presentation of expert evidence upon a number of complex areas including soil analysis, DNA evidence and fingerprint evidence.

R v CG – Prosecution counsel. Trial concerned allegations of historical sexual abuse within a familial context commencing in 1970. Multiple Complainants. Issues of disclosure of material from children’s home, abuse of process and “doli incapax”.

R v KP – Defence counsel. Multiple complainant case concerning allegations of sexual abuse over 30 years previously upon children who were as young as 3– issues of abuse of process and expert evidence regarding aspects of childhood memories.



R v JN – Prosecution counsel. Defendant charged with rape on his partner. Victim and Defendant both deaf and with impaired speech. Trial conducted through British Sign Language interpretation.

R v WB (Operation Thistle) – Prosecution counsel.. Allegations of rape and serious sexual offences against multiple Complainants, all of whom were vulnerable young women with a background of being in care. Case concerned allegations of rape, bestiality, controlling prostitution and indecent images. Case also involved Proceeds of Crime Act proceedings in respect of brothel keeping offences.

R v JR – Prosecution counsel. Defendant charged with the kidnap and rape of a young child who was playing in a local park. Vulnerable victim and complex medical evidence on issue of penetration.

- Homicide

R v A [2023] Cardiff Crown Court - Leading counsel for Defendant in trial of a mother who was charged with manslaughter of her young child during the Covid lockdown of 2020. The Defendant had been suffering from paranoid schizophrenia at the relevant time which caused delusions, auditory hallucinations and disordered thinking which had impact upon her ability to care for her child. The Defendant was found not guilty on the basis of insanity.

R v L-J and T [2023] Mold Crown Court - Leading counsel for the Prosecution in trial of a mother and father for gross negligence manslaughter of their 16 year old daughter who died from neglect of the utmost severity. The victim was disabled, severely and morbidly obese and was restricted to an environment which was unfit for human habitation. The physical decay caused by neglect of the deceased was described by a Great Ormond Street Hospital Consultant of many years experience as the very worst she had ever scene. The trial involved adducing evidence from a number of experts including pathologists, paediatricians, nursing experts and an expert in insect development. The trial involved presentation of very sensitive and distressing evidence including recordings and images of the scene and the Deceased and her extensive physical deterioration. This case attracted national media interest.

R v B and J [2023] Swansea Crown Court - Leading counsel for the Prosecution in trial of the murder of 2 year old Lola James in Haverfordwest. Bevan (mother's partner) was tried for murder and James (child's mother) was tried for allowing the death of a child. Lola had sustained over 100 external injuries and extensive brain injury from shaking or high impact. The trial involved extensive expert medical evidence from a range of specialists on causation of injury including pathology, paediatric neuro radiology, paediatric ophthalmology and general paediatric evidence.

R v T W and 2 others [2022] Merthyr Tydfil Crown Court -Leading counsel for a 17 year old girl with extensive communication needs tried with 2 adults for the murder of Dr Gary Jenkins in Bute Park Cardiff. The trial was high profile with extensive national media coverage.

R v C, W and M [2022] - Leading Counsel for the Prosecution in trial of a step father, mother and teenager for the murder of Logan Mwangi, a 5 year old child from Sarn, Bridgend who died whilst isolated as a result of a positive Covid test. The case involved the construction of the prosecution case from a wide range of evidence, including extensive CCTV, communications evidence and a range of complex medical expert evidence from a range of specialism. The trial also required adjustments to accommodate the 13 year old Defendant who had significant needs. At the conclusion of the trial, issues arose as to the lifting of the reporting restriction in respect of the 13 year old Defendant. The trial was very high profile with extensive national media coverage.



R v K and 11 others [2021] – Newport Crown Court - Leading counsel for Defendant in a multi handed prosecution for murder arising from police Operation Waterhen, at the time thought to be one of the largest police investigations of recent years. The Defendant was from Albania and did not speak English. The prosecution case was based on circumstantial evidence including scientific analysis, CCTV and telecommunications evidence. Successful application to dismiss made on behalf of the Defendant resulting in his acquittal before the trial was listed.

R v C [2021] – Mold Crown Court - Leading counsel for the Prosecution in trial of man for gross negligence manslaughter arising from the death of his partner from suffocation in the course of sexual activity involving drugs use and bondage. The trial involved the presentation of extremely sensitive footage arising from past sexual activity, forensic evidence from the scene and expert medical evidence

R v D and 2 others [2021] – Newport Crown Court - Leading counsel for the first Defendant in trial of 3 Defendants for murder in connection with drugs supply in Newport. Trial involved consideration of complex communication evidence from a range of sources including mobile telephones and fitness applications.

R v C and 7 others [2020 – 2021] – Newport Crown Court: Leading counsel for the first Defendant in trial of 8 Defendants for murder by stabbing of a 17 year old in Barry Docks. The first trial was aborted due to the national lockdown and the re-trial was one of the first multi handed trials to be conducted with Covid related adjustments during the second national lockdown. The case involved extensive expert evidence including pathology and evidence relating to blood distribution at the scene. This case attracted national media coverage.

R v R [2020] Newport Crown Court - Leading counsel for Defendant tried for murder of his partner by possible suffocation/strangulation. Case involved issues of mental illness arising from the Deceased's diagnosis of multiple personality disorder and severe depressive illness. Issues arose relating to the practices of Paganism, practised by both Defendant and the Deceased.

- Drugs

R v DT and others – (Operation Corolla) Defence counsel for first Defendant in multi handed trial concerning conspiracy to supply heroin

R v MM and others – (Operation Hallett) Prosecution counsel. 26 Defendants charged with conspiracy to supply Class B drugs, including a very rare quality of amphetamine sulphate at high purity

R v AH and others – (Operation Orange Gobi) Prosecution counsel. 13 Defendants charged with conspiracy to supply Class A drugs – cocaine

- Nursing home abuse

R v SS and others – Defence counsel for first Defendant in multi Defendant trial concerning physical abuse of elderly and mentally infirm adults in a residential nursing home where Defendant was working as a nurse.

R v SW – Defence counsel Case involving allegations of physical abuse by a nurse at a hospital psychiatric unit

R v K – allegations of physical abuse against a carer at a home for vulnerable adults with mental health issues



Recommendations

- Caroline Rees KC is a highly regarded prosecution and defence barrister who has particular experience acting in cases involving sexual abuse. Many of her cases arise from historical accusations, deal with multiple complainants or concern the trafficking of people for sexual exploitation. She is particularly adept at handling matters involving young and vulnerable witnesses. She also acts in homicide and drug conspiracy cases. "Not only is she a fantastic advocate, she also has a great personal touch with lay clients and puts them at ease." "Caroline is an excellent cross-examiner. She is really powerful in court and has great authority and presence." "In two words: absolutely brilliant. She takes no prisoners." (Chambers & Partners 2024, Crime)
- "She is a superb silk; meticulously prepared and an engaging advocate with an excellent legal mind. She is the go-to silk for cases of gravity and sensitivity." (Legal 500, 2024 - Crime (General And Fraud))
- "Caroline is exceptional at dealing with very difficult and high-profile cases." "She is a formidable opponent." "Her knowledge and expertise is second to none. Caroline is an amazing advocate; her delivery in court is a work of art. She is the safest pair of hands on the circuit." "Caroline is one of the best criminal barristers I have had the pleasure of working with. Her approach to cases is methodical and very thorough." (Chambers UK, 2023 - Crime)
- "Caroline is an outstanding advocate, exceptionally strong in cross examination and meticulously prepared. She has a real presence in court and commands the respect of the judge and opponents. She has a measured and composed approach which inspires confidence with every word she says." (Legal 500, 2023 - Crime)
- Shortlisted in the Legal 500 Awards 2022 - Crime and extradition silk of the year
- "She is an outstanding advocate - she is thoroughly prepared and has an excellent manner with both clients and the court alike." "She is a hard cross-examiner and gets to the heart of the case." (Chambers UK, 2022 - Crime)
- "An exceptionally strong cross-examiner. She really gets to the issues quickly and she's effective in front of the jury." "She doesn't miss a trick. She is thorough, well prepared and she understands how sex crimes are handled." (Chambers UK, 2021)
- 'Her advocacy is very polished and she has an aura in the courtroom.' (Legal 500, 2021)
- 'She is a fantastic advocate, as well as being very approachable and down to earth. She is also very good with clients and is able to make them feel comfortable.' (Chambers UK, 2020)
- 'She has the perfect personality for an advocate: pleasant and direct to deal with, but a tough opponent in court.' (Legal 500, 2020)
- 'An outstanding silk.' (Legal 500, 2018)
- 'She is a thorough and experienced barrister. She works very hard and is very well thought of.' (Chambers UK, 2018)
- 'She demonstrates great client empathy'. (Legal 500, 2017)
- Recommended in Chambers and Partners (Crime: Wales) every year since 2009.
- Currently recommended as a Band 1 recommended counsel in Crime:Wales.
- 'A very experienced prosecution and defence barrister, with particular experience of acting in cases involving sexual abuse. Many of her cases arise from historical accusations or deal with multiple complainants or the trafficking of people for sexual exploitation. She also acts in homicide and drug conspiracy cases' (Chambers UK, 2017)
- 'Her practice encompasses both prosecution and defence work. She is noted for her skill at dealing with



vulnerable clients and witnesses.' "She is very good with clients and is an excellent advocate." (Chambers UK, 2016)

- 'Acts as both a Grade 4 prosecutor and a criminal defence advocate. She is noted for her expertise in complex sexual abuse claims with vulnerable witnesses."She is a calm, firm advocate who doesn't let anything phase her." (Chambers UK, 2015)
- 'Caroline Rees is acclaimed for her extensive experience in sexual offence cases. Clients view her as a "talented and effective advocate.' (Chambers UK, 2013)
- The "very thorough" Caroline Rees has a reassuringly "calm and deliberate" manner. She advised for the prosecution of Joseph Rees in a case alleging rape of a child'. (Chambers UK, 2012)
- Recommended in Chambers 2011 in relation to serious sexual offences
- 'Caroline Rees is "deservedly popular and persuasive"' (Chambers UK, 2010)
- 'Caroline Rees is known as "an excellent all rounder, who is very good with the clients and an outstanding jury advocate"' (Chambers UK, 2009)

Appointments

- Recorder of the Crown Court – December 2015
- Silk - February 2018
- Leader of the Wales and Chester Circuit - 2023

Career

- Oct 1994 – Oct 1995: 33 Park Place, Cardiff. 12 months pupillage.
- Oct 1995 – Dec 1999: Tenant at 33 Park Place, Cardiff
- Dec 1999 to date: Tenant at 30 Park Place, Cardiff specialising in crime
- 2018 – 2023 Founding Chair of the Wales and Chester Circuit Women's Forum
- 2018 - 2023 Member of the Circuit Management Team
- 2023-2025 Leader of the Wales and Chester Circuit (*First female to lead the Wales & Chester Circuit*)

Education & Qualification

- Ysgol Gyfun y Strade, Llanelli (1983-1990)
- University of Birmingham Llb (Hons) (1990 – 1993)
- Inns of Court School of Law, London (1993-1994) Bar Vocational Course



Awards

Gray's Inn Major Scholarship – Wilfred Getz award (1994)

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