

David Knifton QC

Call 1986



Clerks' Details

- 👤 Rachel Williams
- 📞 0151 242 8840

Appointments

- Accredited Mediator (2006)
- Recorder - Crown and County Court (2002)

Memberships

- Northern Circuit
- Personal Injury Bar Association
- Professional Negligence Bar Association
- Northern Circuit Medico-Legal Association

Education

- LLB (Hons), University of Nottingham (Class II.i, 1985)
- Inner Temple, Duke of Edinburgh Entrance Scholarship

Inquests

Overview

David has substantial experience of acting at inquests and public inquiries, and has appeared in a number of such high-profile cases to date. He considers that effective representation at the inquest can often be a cost-effective means of securing supportive evidence for clinical negligence claims, claims arising from fatal accidents at work, or fatal road traffic accidents. At the same time, he is sensitive to the need to support families who have suffered the tragic loss of a loved one, and for whom obtaining answers regarding the cause of death may be more important than any future damages claim. He has also been instructed at inquests by public bodies including health authorities and the police.

Recommendations

“He is technically excellent, and his attention to detail is second to none.” “He is extremely effective and very energetic. He is clear with clients, caring and very responsive.”

“Forensic, accessible, innovative and great with clients.” “He is able to distil complex clinical negligence cases down to the key issues, and his advice is well prepared, well structured and well delivered.”

Chambers and Partners 2022

“Talented silk who specialises in acting for claimants who have suffered catastrophic brain and spinal injuries and amputations, notably those with complicating factors such as disputed liability and contributory negligence. He is skilled at preparing schedules of loss.” “His attention to detail and client care skills are excellent.” “He is very organised and communicative.” “He conducts his cases with skill and has excellent judgement.”

“An excellent strategist who is completely trusted by clients and will fight tooth and nail to get the best result possible. He is bright, sharp and has excellent attention to detail.” “He is very approachable and good at explaining difficult issues to clients.”

Chambers and Partners 2021

“He’s a good negotiator and is very thorough.” “He’s always well prepared and has very good attention to detail.”

Chambers and Partners 2020

“He is able to deal with huge amounts of detail and quantum elements very quickly. He is organised in his approach and in conferences he will provide a detailed plan, which clients appreciate.”

Chambers and Partners 2019

“Technically excellent. He takes a pragmatic approach to cases and is very approachable.” “He has a keen eye for detail and gets excellent results. Clients like him.”

Chambers and Partners 2018

“Just supreme in his technical ability, though his best asset is the way he can take something that appears indecipherable and break it down into manageable terms, not only for the solicitor but for the client.” “He takes no nonsense and gets the job done. Meticulous in his preparation and strong in negotiation, he is a calm but strong and reassuring presence.”

Chambers and Partners 2017

“A highly-experienced senior junior who acts primarily for claimants on cases involving serious injuries, with notable expertise in military claims... He is meticulous in his approach. He’s calm and patient with clients, with a reassuring and confident demeanour. He is efficient, accessible and approachable. He has excellent technical skills

together with a superb manner with clients.”

Chambers and Partners 2016

“Focuses in particular on claimant work, with notable skills in dealing with matters involving brain, spinal injury and military claims. Interviewees particularly praise his excellent client skills.” “He is fiercely intelligent whilst also being tactically brilliant.” “He is very practical, and has a very nice manner with clients and opponents.”

Chambers and Partners 2015

“David is highly impressive and effective with clients and experts alike. All good silks can refine cases down to a few key issues, but David goes further providing a certain clarity to difficult issues. He is forensic in his approach and delivers his advice in a clear, effective manner leaving nothing to be misunderstood. Excellent with lay clients and experts. A problem solver and a thinker.”

The Legal 500 2022

“David has great technical knowledge and a keen forensic eye for detail, and his experience sitting as a Judge, places him in an excellent position to advise on the likely approach of the court. David has a relaxed and calm manner which is particularly helpful with claimants. David has always been very accessible which is crucial in litigation, available to provide fast advice and guidance on situations that may arise.”

“David is calm, patient with families who have seen the worst things happen to them, and a determined and able advocate. He will fight difficult cases and is able to quickly determine the right approach on any case. He is not shy of taking on the most difficult cases and successfully navigates them.”

The Legal 500 2021

“A true claimant specialist who is determined to fight for clients.”

The Legal 500 2020

“He argues his points with a steely charm.”

The Legal 500 2018/19

“Thorough, quick and tactically astute.”

The Legal 500 2017

“He has a fantastic eye for detail, and is always calm and rational under pressure.”

The Legal 500 2016

Cases

Re JH (2017)

David acted on behalf of Liverpool City Council in a tragic case where a vulnerable man with severe learning difficulties died as a result of acute brain swelling due to status epilepticus. His mother had failed to administer his medication, and had refused numerous offers of assistance from the Authority's social services department, leading HM Coroner to observe that it was very difficult to see what further steps could have been taken to prevent his death.

Re MF (2015)

David acted on behalf of the Countess of Chester Hospital in an inquest into the death of a patient who died as a result of aspiration, where the psychiatric hospital from which he was admitted with pneumonia and cardiac failure had failed to identify his longstanding swallowing difficulties and aspiration risk at the time of his admission.

Cowan (2013)

An inquest into a fatal accident at work, where careful questioning of the witnesses established a clear breach of the employers' duties, leading to subsequent settlement of the claim for £400,000. David's sensitive handling of the case was praised by the family.

The "Blue 25" Inquest (2011)

High-profile inquest into the deaths of 5 UK servicemen killed by a rogue Afghan policeman at a checkpoint in Helmand Province, which attracted major TV and newspaper coverage, and in which David questioned senior military officers "with honed skill" regarding the wisdom of the policy of 'embedded partnering' with Afghan forces, having persuaded the Coroner that a short inquest which failed to investigate such issues would not be compliant with the Human Rights Act.

Corless (2010)

An inquest concerning the death of a cyclist killed by the driver of a vehicle who alleged she had suffered a loss of control due to reflex syncope, in which David was required to question leading medical experts regarding the issues involved.

Morecambe Bay Helicopter Crash Inquest (2009)

A highly-publicised inquest into a fatal helicopter crash resulting from poor weather, pilot disorientation and poorly-executed transfer of control, which later led to settlement of the fatal accident claim for £375,000.

Clifton (2008)

An inquest concerning the tragic death of a young woman with a chronic history of depression who hanged herself shortly following her discharge from a mental hospital, in which David was praised by the Coroner for his sensitive and careful questioning of medical witnesses, in order to establish the cause of death.

Sims (2009)

A fatal aircraft collision in which various pilots blamed each other, but where the inquest provided valuable evidence in support of a fatal accident claim which later settled for substantial damages.

North Wales (Waterhouse) Child Abuse Inquiry (1997-98)

David acted on behalf of several former care workers accused of serious sexual or physical abuse in what was at the time the largest public inquiry into child abuse ever held in the UK.

Beyond the Bar

David is married with 4 children, 3 of whom have autism spectrum disorders. He was responsible for setting up a pro bono alliance between Exchange Chambers and the National Autistic Society to provide advice and representation in the field of special educational needs. This alliance has provided invaluable assistance to parents struggling to secure appropriate education to meet their children's needs. Away from work, he is a keen musician, singing in a choir and occasionally playing guitar and keyboards in a band. He enjoys cycling, and was a member of the Chambers' team which raised nearly £30,000 following a trans-Pennine charity ride.