Catherine Knowles

Call 2004

Clerks

Leigh Daniels
0161 817 2768

Joe Mawson
0161 817 2753

Olivia Cleere
0161 817 7138

Appointments

- Junior Counsel to the Crown – Regional Panel A

Memberships

- Employment Law Bar Association
- Employment Lawyers' Association
- Personal Injury Bar Association
- Licensed for Direct Access

Education

- BA Jurisprudence, St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford (Class II.i, 2002)
- Bar Vocational Course, Inns of Court School of Law (Outstanding, 2004)

Employment

Catherine's employment practice covers the full spectrum of employment issues, with a particular focus on claims involving allegations of discrimination and whistleblowing. She is primarily instructed on behalf of respondents.

She is currently on the Attorney-General's Regional A Panel of Junior Counsel, and she has particular experience of cases involving the public sector, having been instructed on behalf of government departments, local authorities, NHS Trusts and trade unions.

Catherine's complementary personal injury practice means that she is well placed to advise in high value discrimination cases involving claims for personal injury and requiring the instruction of medical experts.

She also has experience of employment related commercial cases in the High Court involving allegations of breach of confidence, breach of fiduciary duty and restrictive covenants.

Catherine has a well-earned reputation for her organisation, her teamwork, and her ability to merge sensitivity with strength when instructed.

Employment Cases

Recent instructions include:

- Advising a government department facing a claim for sexual harassment and sex discrimination by a senior civil servant.
- Gajsler v Department for Work and Pensions (Manchester ET). Catherine represented the DWP in this claim in which G alleged that the DWP had failed to make reasonable adjustments over many years, allegedly causing a deterioration in her health and

ultimate retirement on ill-health grounds. G discontinued her claim after being cross-examined.

- Rashid v Commissioners for HM Revenue & Customs (Manchester ET). R unsuccessfully claimed that HMRC's decision not to appoint him to a vacancy was tainted by age, race and religious discrimination. Catherine represented HMRC.
- F v G (Liverpool ET). F claimed that she had been unfairly dismissed, and that her dismissal was an act of victimisation for having raised a complaint against G's CEO. Catherine represented G at trial, following which F's claims were dismissed.
- Representing a government department in a claim by an employee for equal pay, sex discrimination and constructive dismissal.
- Representing a facilities management company and its account manager in a claim alleging that the claimant had been sexually harassed.
- Representing a charity and its board in a claim brought by a former employee who claims to have been: unfairly dismissed and subjected to detriment on grounds of having made a protected disclosure (whistleblowing); directly discriminated against because of race, religious belief and sex; harassed related to race, religious belief and sex; and victimised.
- Representing a government department in a claim by two employees for indirect sex and age discrimination and equal pay.
- Representing a government department in a claim brought by a former employee alleging disability discrimination, harassment and unfair dismissal. The claim was dismissed after a 6 day hearing.
- Representing a government department in a claim brought by a former employee for disability discrimination (direct and failure to make reasonable adjustments), harassment and victimisation. The claim was dismissed after a 4 day hearing.
- Representing a government department in a claim brought by a former employee for direct and indirect disability discrimination, discrimination because of something arising in consequence of disability and a failure to make reasonable adjustments. The claim was dismissed after a 4 day hearing.
- Representing a government department in an unusual claim for disability discrimination and unfair dismissal, involving consideration of an order for re-instatement and a claim for substantial pension loss.

Recommendations

"Catherine is a highly effective advocate, extremely impressive in a trial, and incredible in cross-examination."

"Catherine is very focused. She is highly skilled in dealing with military claims, and is very strong on quantum. She is one of the best barristers to go to for complex and high value claims."
The Legal 500, 2026

"Catherine is not fazed by huge volumes of evidence or complexities and last minute uncertainties created by claimants' last minute attempts to change the issues and bring in lots of additional evidence. Catherine quickly, calmly and confidently gets to grips with the issues and evidence in the case, works well in preparing witnesses for hearing, and is able to flex her preparation and approach as cases evolve."

"Catherine is extremely thorough and detailed. Her written advice is second-to-none and always clear and well thought out, she is a gritty and smart negotiator, she is excellent on her feet, and she has a broad knowledge on a wide range of topics."
The Legal 500, 2025

"Catherine is responsive, practical and approachable, and her advice is always detailed, sensible and takes into account wider issues. She is an extremely calming and an impressive advocate."

"Catherine is a well-prepared and thorough advocate who is confident but not aggressive. She is reasonable in her arguments."
Chambers and Partners 2025

"Catherine is an excellent advocate; calm, precise, and she presents her arguments in a clear and persuasive manner."
The Legal 500, 2024

"We really value Catherine's advice and level of expertise. Her attention to detail is second to none and she views everything through a commercial and reputational lens."
Chambers and Partners 2024

"Catherine is very experienced and well versed in military claims. She is incredibly thorough in her work and advice. In addition, she is very approachable and a very good advocate. One of the best barristers operating in the field."
The Legal 500, 2023

"Catherine is thorough, has great attention to detail and is a particularly good advocate. Not only is she a fantastic barrister she is very approachable. Catherine deals with high value military claims and is able to provide clear and concise advices, deals with quantum matters effectively and produces good results."
The Legal 500, 2022

"An exceptional barrister who's attention to detail is second to none. Very logical stance and would not hesitate to recommend to anyone needing an employment barrister in the Northern circuit."
The Legal 500, 2022

"Very straightforward and strong on her feet. A strong and approachable barrister."
Chambers and Partners 2021

"Catherine is a particularly thorough and efficient advocate, who we know we can rely on to perform and achieve good results."

"She has particular expertise in military claims."
The Legal 500, 2021

"Efficient, thorough and articulate."
The Legal 500, 2020

"Noted for her expertise in discrimination claims."
The Legal 500, 2018/19

"Recommended for discrimination matters."
The Legal 500, 2017

"A tenacious advocate with a great eye for detail and commercial acumen."
The Legal 500, 2016

"Her workload spans areas such as whistleblowing, discrimination and TUPE."
The Legal 500, 2015