

LAURA FARRIS

Call: 2007



Recommended as a leading junior in employment and discrimination law who acts in cases 'that stand to have lasting effects on the law' and is sought out for advice on everything from 'high-value City claims and High Court matters to complex discrimination claims.' (Chambers UK)

"She is fantastic, her written work is fantastic, she's extremely good in meetings. She is a very safe pair of hands and completely calm under fire." (Chambers UK 2017)

"A calm and incisive junior with a confidence born out of the fact that she knows her case backwards." (Chambers and Partners 2015)

"Very good with clients and able to instil confidence." (Chambers and Partners 2015)

Laura's practice spans the range of **employment, equality, partnership and commercial** disputes as well as **public and tax** law.

In 2015 she was appointed to the panel of Counsel for the Equality and Human Rights Commission and in 2014 as Junior Counsel to the Crown (C-Panel).

She has advised and represented clients in the Employment Tribunal, the Employment Appeal Tribunal, the High Court and Court of Appeal and is regularly instructed on high-value or high-profile cases.

Many of her employer clients are from the financial services sector and include investment banks, private equity houses and hedge funds. She also acts for employers in the education and health care sectors (including the NHS), blue chip companies, local authorities, trade unions, charities and both local and national government departments. Her claimant clients are often senior executives and she has experience of securing high value compensatory awards involving the assessment of whole career loss.

Laura has particular experience of complex discrimination and whistleblowing complaints and disciplinary/regulatory matters. Her commercial practice intersects with her employment work and encompasses post-termination restraints, High Court injunctions and LLP/Partnership disputes.

Her public law practice primarily centres on educational and equalities issues. She has acted in judicial review applications in the High Court and appeared in the First Tier and Upper Tribunals in relation to SEN issues.

In relation to tax, Laura is instructed in both statutory appeals and judicial review claims on behalf of both HMRC and the tax payer and has appeared in the specialist tax tribunals, the High Court and Court of Appeal.

Before becoming a barrister Laura worked in journalism for Reuters Business TV and BBC News and for Hillary Clinton in her New York Senate Office.

Employment

Her principal areas of expertise include:

- Unfair and wrongful dismissal
- Discrimination
- Bonus claims and restrictive covenants
- LLP and partnership disputes
- Disciplinary and regulatory matters
- Data protection and confidential information
- Whistleblowing
- Transfer of undertakings and service provision changes
- Redundancy
- Jurisdictional matters
- Issues of employment taxation
- Cost and interim relief applications

Recent appellate work includes:

- **The BBC v Roden** UKEAT/0385/14/DA – leading case concerning the right to anonymity where allegations of serious sexual offences are concerned (led by John Bowers QC)
- **A Company v Callaway** UKEAT/0200/14 – an appeal concerning the correct application of the burden of proof in pregnancy discrimination cases.
- **Koudriachova v University College London** UKEAT/0132/14 – an appeal concerning the interpretation of “reasonable practicability” in the context of time limits.
- **Holness v (1) London Underground Ltd. & (2) Bashford** UKEAT/1235/12/LA – an appeal concerning the sustainability of the employment tribunal’s findings on victimization.
- **The Prince’s Trust v Donelan** UKEAT/0107/12/JOJ – an appeal against the employment tribunal’s findings of disability-related discrimination and harassment under the DDA 1995 on the basis that it misapplied the burden of proof, incorrectly constructed the comparator and made findings which went further than the claimant’s own case.
- **Beach v National Policing Improvement Agency** UKEAT/0398/12/ZT – an appeal concerning an extension of time limits.

Notable recent tribunal cases include:

- **M & C v A Company** (2016) – represented the Respondent in high value race claim brought to by two senior managers. The hearing was listed for four weeks but reached a settlement just before it began.
- **Ward v BMI Healthcare Ltd.** (2015) – represented the Respondent in an eight-day whistleblowing and constructive dismissal claim.
- **Hill v Tiffany & Co. and others** (2014) – represented the Claimant in an eight-day claim for constructive dismissal and sex discrimination.

- **D'Souza v An Investment Bank** (2014) - represented the Respondent in a six-day claim for race discrimination and unfair dismissal.
- **G v British Broadcasting Corporation** (2014) – acted for the Claimant in a claim for breach of contract and unfair dismissal. The claim involved an application for an anonymity order and Article 8 issues.
- **X v An Investment Bank** (2013) – acted for the Respondent in a high profile and high value claim for unfair dismissal and race discrimination, led by Tom Linden QC
- **Y v Royal Bank of Scotland** (2013) – acted for the Respondent in a breach of contract and unfair dismissal claim.
- **Evans v University of Reading** (2013) – acted for the Respondent in 5-day whistleblowing claim.
- **Packham v Hewlett Packard** (2012) – represented the Claimant in a 2-week case of disability discrimination, a failure to make reasonable adjustments and unfair dismissal. The claim involved an assessment of whole career losses.
- **Miller v Roche Products Ltd.** (2011) – represented the Respondent in a 6-day whistle-blowing and unfair dismissal claim (this case was reported in the Financial Times).
- **Switalski v F&C Asset Management** (2008) All ER (D) 342 – led by Suzanne McKie QC for the Claimant in both the employment tribunal and EAT in this high-profile and widely reported sex discrimination case.

Disciplinary and Regulatory

Laura conducts disciplinary and grievance investigations on behalf of educational establishments, financial institutions and local authorities. Recently she has:

- Investigated a disciplinary matter on behalf of a local authority concerning allegations of gross negligence by a care worker in a respite home;
- Investigated a grievance concerning allegations of race discrimination brought by a staff member at a girls school;
- Investigated a grievance concerning allegations of sex discrimination brought by a senior manager at an investment bank;
- Advised an investment bank on its handling of a disciplinary hearing concerning a member staff implicated in serious malpractice.

Commercial

Laura's commercial practice encompasses business protection matters, including High Court injunctions, misuse of confidential information and bonus disputes. She is also instructed in contractual disputes, LLP/Partnership disputes, competition claims, procurement and costs. In 2013 she spent four months on secondment at the Office of Fair Trading where she was involved in a formal investigation into epyx Ltd. ["Epyx"] – a company supplying e-trading platforms in the automotive industry – whom the OFT had reasonable grounds to believe was abusing its dominant market position.

Her recent commercial cases include:

- **T&M v VCM LLP** [2014] – Acting for the Claimants in a partnership dispute involving tax related issues arising out of a breach of an LLP agreement.
- **B v Leeds City Council** [2014] – Advising the Claimant, an independent contractor, on EU procurement issues and a potential high-value claim for breach of contract.

- ***Rocks Off Ltd. v Dedhar*** [2013] – Acted for the Defendant at a return hearing in the High Court following an *ex parte* injunction concerning the alleged misuse of confidential information.
- ***H v RV LLP*** [2013] – advised the Claimant in a bonus dispute arising out of a breach of an LLP agreement.
- ***Southern Rock Insurance v Endsleigh Insurance*** (led by **Colin Edelman QC** and **Richard Harrison**) - a breach of contract claim valued in excess of £15 million against a claims handling service arising out of 50,000 motor insurance claims.

Public Law

Laura's public law practice centres on educational and immigration issues and often dovetails with her discrimination work. She has acted in judicial review applications concerning public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010, and recently advised the NASUWT teachers' union on a potential judicial review application in relation to Government changes to performance management and capability procedures led by **Helen Mountfield QC**. Her recent cases include:

- ***R (Dean Wilson) v Office of the Independent Adjudicator and others*** [2014] EWHC 558 (Admin): Represented the Defendant at a judicial review hearing concerning its decision regarding the Claimant's degree classification and the quantum of damages.
- ***R (Gopikrishna) v Office of the Independent Adjudicator*** CO/11271/2013 - represented the Defendant in a judicial review permission hearing concerning the procedural fairness of its decision not to review the relevant university's degree decision and alleged non-compliance with its public sector equality duty.
- ***McLavery Atkins & Cooper v The Lord Chancellor*** [2014] – advising the Defendant in a potential judicial review challenge relating to a legal aid classification decision.
- ***R (McEwan) v National Taxing Team*** [2013] High Court: Acting for the Respondent in a judicial review of its assessment of costs in defending a criminal charge.

Tax

Laura is developing a substantial contentious tax practice in which she is instructed in cases by both HMRC and the taxpayer. She has experience of both statutory appeals and judicial review claims in the tax context and has appeared in the specialist tax tribunals, the High Court and Court of Appeal.

Her recent instructions include:

- ***R (McEwan) v National Taxing Team*** [2013] High Court: Acting for the Respondent in a judicial review of its assessment of costs in defending a criminal charge.
- ***Latchways v Commissioners for HMRC*** [2013], First Tier Tax Tribunal: Acted for HMRC in an appeal against import duties.
- ***Lewis v HMRC*** [2013] First Tier Tax Tribunal: Concerning HMRC's decision that VAT and import duties were properly chargeable in a Transfer of Residence context and that this was not a "special case" justifying an extension of time.
- ***Giant Strongbox v HMRC*** [2010] First Tier Tax Tribunal, led by Tim Brennan QC: Represented the tax payer, an umbrella employment agency, in an appeal concerning the proper meaning of "temporary workplaces" and the corresponding tax consequences for those whom it engaged.
- ***R (Prudential Plc.) v Special Commissioner of Income Tax*** [2010] EWCA Civ. 1094, led by Tim

Brennan QC: Acted for the Respondent in an appeal concerning the application of legal professional privilege to accountants giving tax advice.

Seminars and Publications

Her recent seminars and publications are:

- Supreme Court decides LLP members are workers under ERA 1996 – ELA Briefing article, July 2014
- ELA Foundation Course in Discrimination Law – July 2013
- Examining the role of partners as employees – Lexis Nexis webinar, March 2013
- Ill health and damages: Guidance on causation and calculation – Matrix Annual Employment Seminar, February 2013
- Confidential information in the work place - Stewarts Law LLP, March 2012
- Phone hacking, Blagging and the Public Interest: Liability of Employers – Seminar Paper – Matrix Seminar, November 2011 with James Laddie QC
- Compulsory retirement: going out of fashion – article for the ELA briefing, March 2011 with Tom Linden QC
- Recent developments in the law of age discrimination – Berwin Leighton Paisner, February 2011 with Tom Linden QC
- Clause and Effect: A review of developments in employment-related contract law - Contractual Disciplinary Procedures - Matrix Annual Employment Seminar March 2011
- Defamation and Twitter: First Love – Article for the Inform Media Law Blog – January 2011
- Tottel's Discrimination Law, co-author of chapter on Sex Discrimination with Mo Sethi – 2009-2011

She is a member of ELA, ELBA, COMBAR and ELAAS.

Education and Awards

- 1997-2000: Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University
- Politics Philosophy and Economics, MA(Hons) 2:1
- 2006-2007: City University, Graduate Diploma in Law – Distinction
- 2007-2008: BPP Law School, Bar Vocational Course - Very Competent
- 2007: Prince of Wales Scholarship, Grays Inn (BVC).