

Elizabeth Melville

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Overview

Elizabeth has over 20 years' experience as an employment lawyer and now specialises in high-level investigatory and internal disciplinary work. Her work involves investigating serious allegations against senior individuals within a wide range of organisations, from high-profile political, sporting and arts organisations to banks, charities, schools and universities, spanning both the private and public sector. Much of her work in recent years has involved allegations of serious sexual harassment and assault (including historic allegations) following on from the #MeToo campaign, as well as allegations of other forms of discrimination and misconduct. Her unique qualifications and expertise often see Elizabeth instructed on investigations that would typically attract a silk appointment.

Elizabeth also maintains a niche litigation practice within the employment tribunal and EAT alongside her investigation work.

Elizabeth complements her core legal practice with expertise in mental health and wellbeing, in which she takes a keen interest and lectures regularly. She has studied analytical psychology with a London based training organisation, including undertaking a clinical placement within an NHS psychiatric clinic, and has worked one to one with clients therapeutically. She draws on this experience when conducting investigations; she tailors her approach to suit the particular client and context, and is able to interact sensitively with both complainants and accused individuals alike.

Elizabeth is a qualified mediator and is able to conduct workplace mediations, coaching and internal training. She also regularly chairs appeal and grievance hearings within organisations.

Investigations

Recent investigations: examples:

Academic institutions and schools

- Investigating allegations of race discrimination and failure to address special educational needs over a 4 year period, made by the parents of a black pupil against the Head and several staff members of a leading London independent school.
- Investigating allegations of serious sexual harassment and assault by the CEO of a London based national academic body against a female member of staff. Involved interviewing other members of the organisation's senior management team as well as a number of other women who gave evidence of similar experiences with the individual;
- Investigating allegations by a teacher against senior members of the teaching staff (including the head) at a leading London independent school. The allegations were wide ranging including race discrimination and harassment, sexual harassment (against the head) and bullying;
- Investigating allegations of bullying and harassment raised by an academic against other academic staff within a UK leading business school. The complainant had apparent mental health issues which had affected his perceptions and needed to be addressed in the investigation report;
- Investigating complaints of sexual harassment and bullying against the headmaster of an independent secondary school;
- Investigating wide-ranging allegations of discrimination raised by a PhD

Expertise

- Education & Safeguarding
- Employment & Discrimination
- Health
- Investigations
- Mediation

Recommendations

"Lizzie is absolutely brilliant. Not only is she fantastic to work with, but her manner with clients and witnesses is exceptional. Her attention to detail is excellent, cutting to the core of an issue extremely quickly." Chambers & Partners 2024

"Elizabeth is excellent on workplace investigations. She is diligent and thorough but proportionate, and has an excellent manner with witnesses." Chambers & Partners 2023

"Elizabeth is thorough, practical, and has a good manner with witnesses." The Legal 500 2023

Key contacts

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student within an Oxbridge school of science against various academics.

Sport

- Investigating allegations (including historic allegations) of sexual harassment by various female members of staff against a member of the senior management team of a world-renowned sporting body. Involved interviewing both senior staff members as well as victims.

The Arts

- Investigating allegations of sexual harassment going back some 11 years against a senior manager at a national Arts organisation. The allegations were prompted by the revelations against Harvey Weinstein in the US.

Charities

- Instructed by a leading UK charity to review the charity's handling of allegations of sexual assault made by a member of staff against a colleague, including a review of the charity's policies;
- Investigating whistleblowing complaints by three senior employees within a charity against the CEO, including allegations of financial misconduct, alleged manipulation of accounts and inadequate safeguarding.

Politics

- Instructed to investigate complaints of sexual harassment made by three female employees against the acting CEO of a high profile political advocacy and campaign group. These allegations appeared in the national press;
- Investigating a grievance brought by the secretary general of an international parliamentary organisation against the chairperson of the executive committee. The grievance concerned a contractual dispute as well as alleged race discrimination against the chairperson and whether or not there had been a breakdown in the relationship between the parties, and also raised wider issues of both racial and regional tensions within the organisation. It involved interviewing various senior individuals across a number of jurisdictions.

Private sector

- Instructed by a retail and investment bank to conduct a grievance investigation brought by an employee exhibiting signs of poor mental health, including paranoia and bizarre behaviour, and to advise them on how to deal with the employee in light of his health issues;
- Investigating complaints of bullying, harassment and disability discrimination raised by a lawyer against a partner and colleagues within a department of a leading law firm.

Industrial

- Instructed by the general secretary of a trade union to investigate and determine complaints of breach of the Union's Rule Book against 5 members of the NEC in conduct that amounted to an alleged internal "coup".

Public sector

- Instructed by a local authority to conduct an investigation into what had gone wrong within a department which had led to an award of nearly £500,000 in an employment tribunal claim by one of its employees. The issues concerned allegations of bullying by a single manager over a 3-year period, as well as systemic failings within the organisation in failing to deal with the issues.

Professional Recommendations



"She is methodical and well prepared."

Chambers & Partners 2024

"Lizzie is absolutely brilliant. Not only is she fantastic to work with, but her manner with clients and witnesses is exceptional. Her attention to detail is excellent, cutting to the core of an issue extremely quickly."

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Chambers & Partners 2023

"Elizabeth is thorough, practical, and has a good manner with witnesses."

The Legal 500 2023

"She is meticulously prepared, she is an effective cross-examiner and she creates a positive feeling of a team between the clients, the solicitor and the barrister."

"She has become something of an investigations specialist who seems to be able to get underneath the surface of the dispute or situation and make a judgement that is entirely fair."

Chambers & Partners 2022

"She is a terrifically strong advocate." "She's fantastic at conducting workplace investigations."

Chambers & Partners 2021

"Excellent, responsive and meticulously thorough, Elizabeth is also very client friendly and always willing to go the extra mile."

The Legal 500 2021

"Her preparation is meticulous and her advocacy is fantastic." "Very user-friendly and willing to go the extra mile for the client."

Chambers & Partners 2020

"Meticulous in her preparation for cases. An excellent and thorough advocate."

Chambers & Partners 2019

"Her preparation is meticulous and her cross-examination is extremely thorough."

Chambers & Partners 2018