

## Sophie Beesley

CALL: 2012

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### Overview

Sophie was called to the Bar in July 2012 and joined Old Square Chambers in October 2013. She specialises in clinical negligence and personal injury cases, and inquests. Sophie's only defence work is through her appointment to the Attorney General's B panel where she represents the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence and Home Office in similar cases, and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority in public law matters. Sophie is ranked in both the UK's leading legal directories, *Chambers & Partners* and *The Legal 500*. Sophie sits as a Deputy District Judge.

Sophie's particular interest is in sensitive cases where clients are vulnerable or affected by trauma. Her current cases include childbirth deaths and injuries, stillbirths, preventable suicides, management of mental health in outpatient settings, post-traumatic stress disorder (with a focus on the Armed Forces and in the context of sexual abuse and violence), modern slavery and inquests and fatal accidents, including murders in immigration detention and probation hostels.

Sophie's original degree was in psychology. She came to the Bar after a successful career with Deloitte and The Prince's Trust. She was deputy director of a domestic violence legal pro-bono service, a magistrate and bench chair for over ten years, and established and still runs a charity supporting a children's home in South Africa. In 2018, supported by the Pegasus Trust, Sophie undertook human rights cases in Australia for the Aboriginal Legal Service. In 2019/20, she was sole counsel to the Paterson Inquiry.

This background underpins the recognition Sophie has received for building trust between clients, solicitors and experts, and for responsive and reliable client care.

In her free time Sophie enjoys being outdoors. Her family are from Cornwall where she escapes to the coast path. She loves sailing and has competed in the Sydney Hobart Yacht Race. Her partner is a talented chef and Sophie enjoys eating his efforts. The dream is of a bolthole by the sea and a dog (small disagreement as to whether that will be an Italian Greyhound or an Alsatian).

### Appointments

- 2017 Attorney General's C Panel of Counsel to the Crown
- 2021 Attorney General's B Panel of Counsel to the Crown

### Qualifications

- First Class BSc Psychology Degree (Hons) from the University of Warwick.
- Outstanding on the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC)
- Distinction in the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL)
- ADR Group Accredited Civil and Commercial Mediator
- Certificate in Counselling Skills from City University, London

### Prizes

- 2018 Pegasus Scholarship to undertake legal voluntary work abroad
- 2012 Lincoln's Inn Student of the Year for achieving the highest BPTC result
- 2012 Bristol Law School prize for achieving the highest BPTC result
- 2012 Carol Crowdy prize for the highest mark in the BPTC Civil Litigation and Evidence module
- Winner of 2012 Albion Chambers' family advocacy and criminal

### Expertise

- Administrative & Public Law
- Clinical Negligence
- Inquests & Public Inquiries
- Personal Injury
- SHE & Criminal Regulatory

### Recommendations

"Sophie is simply one of the most impressive clinical negligence juniors. She is meticulously prepared, a clear thinker and a persuasive advocate. She has developed an outstanding practice in claimant clinical negligence work." *The Legal 500 2024*

"Sophie is absolutely excellent: she has very good tactical awareness in putting a case together. She is also able to empathise well with clients." *Chambers & Partners 2024*

"Sophie is highly astute. She is an excellent tactician." "She gives straightforward, intelligent and practical advice. She is very good with clients as she is empathetic but also has a good sense of authority. She approaches cases in a helpful, positive and practical way." *Chambers & Partners 2023*

"Sophie is one of the most impressive junior barristers doing claimant clinical negligence work at the Bar, with an impressive work ethic." *The Legal 500 2023*

### Key contacts

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advocacy competitions

- Winner of 2012 Guildhall Chambers' civil & commercial advocacy competition
- Winner of 2012 Master's award in the Worshipful Company of Arbitrators national mediation competition
- 2012 Lincoln's Inn Megarry scholarship
- 2011 Lincoln's Inn Lord Denning scholarship (major BPTC award)

## Clinical Negligence & Personal Injury

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Clinical negligence and personal injury claims are distinct, but clients in both are often vulnerable or traumatised. These sensitive cases are Sophie's particular specialism, backed by eight years' experience of different injuries and contexts. Her clinical negligence claims encompass the private and public sectors, inpatient and outpatient care and factors from delayed diagnosis to inadequate care, substandard technique to poor judgment. In personal injury, Sophie represents in all the traditional claims, including road traffic, occupiers' and employers' liability, industrial disease, defective premises, and consumer protection.

Her concern with sensitive cases has given Sophie extensive experience of sexual abuse claims in different settings, and recognised expertise in claims involving the Armed Forces. Many of her cases cross over with human rights law.

Sophie strives not only to get appropriate financial awards (and she has achieved significant settlements), but also to focus on clients who need her kind of approach. Such cases may involve complex medical evidence or social issues where clients struggle or are unable to speak for themselves (e.g. decisions on informed consent, the right to die with dignity, discharge from mental health services and childbirth).

Sophie is strong in oral advocacy and also very skilled in written advocacy. Many of her claims settle because of her persuasive pleadings, skeletons and submissions, and accessible, succinct client advice. Sophie's financial grounding at Deloitte means she is very adept at complex quantum calculations and Ogden multiplier manipulation, as in loss of a military/civilian career and pension loss in benefit and contribution-based schemes. Skilled in creating persuasive narrative schedules and negotiation plans for joint settlements, her detailed understanding increasing her persuasiveness as she challenges and adapts calculations quickly and confidently.

Sophie enjoys the teamwork of being led, and is instructed as junior counsel to QCs in her own and other chambers, as well as the independence of representing her own clients. She enjoys winning the trust of solicitors and lay clients and recognises the leap of faith involved in instructing a new barrister. She has embraced the opportunity to demonstrate her capability by providing seminars over video platforms; topics include maximising damages in stillbirth cases, contributory negligence in preventable suicides and shades of grey in the standard of care in diagnosis claims.

Some of Sophie's recent cases include:

- Delayed diagnosis of lung cancer leading to a mother's death. Involved the quantification of complex financial and service dependency claims. Settled in excess of £500,000.
- Sub-standard bowel surgery leading to the requirement for a stoma, which was positioned away from the agreed site without medical justification, vitiating the claimant's consent and causing complications including significant psychological injury and leaking.
- Avoidable injury during childbirth because of the mismanagement of a forceps delivery. Injuries included a 4<sup>th</sup> degree tear and have resulted in severe double incontinence and long term psychological injury.
- Avoidable stillbirth of the only child of a woman previously unable to fall pregnant. Significant disabling psychological injury, loss of a career, complex psychological care needs and a claim for a full programme of fertility treatments to try and enable the conception of a further child.
- Delayed diagnosis of PTSD in serving members of the Armed Forces which caused the loss of successful military careers and pensions, and subsequently impaired civilian lives. Such cases often settling for around £1m.
- The catastrophic consequences of an avoidable accident in Afghanistan which would cause a young soldier significant lifelong disability. Settled for over £4.5m.
- Multiple claims involving the historic sexual abuse of children in the Sea Cadets.

Being led in a birth injury case involving physical injuries to the mother and avoidable cerebral palsy in the child. Settled at JSM for in excess of £18m equivalent mix of lump sum and PPO.

## Inquests & Inquiries

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There is a natural overlap between Sophie's clinical negligence and personal injury work, and her representation of families at inquests. Providing continuity to clients across the coronial and civil jurisdictions is important and ensures clients are best placed to get answers to questions surrounding the death, the prevention of similar deaths or to recover compensation to support a changed future.

Sophie's work for the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defence, and her interest in those in mental health care, have given her considerable experience of Article 2 jury inquests involving the deaths of individuals in, or touched upon, by state care.

In relation to inquiries, Sophie was instructed as sole counsel to the Paterson Inquiry which reviewed the circumstances surrounding Ian Paterson's malpractice, learning lessons and making recommendations to improve safety and quality of patient care.

Sophie's recent inquests include:

- The preventable suicide of an autistic teenager who was failed by community mental health services. Sophie successfully argued that Article 2 was engaged in this case.
- An employer's health and safety failures which caused a man's death in a serious workplace accident. The investigation led to health and safety executive prosecutions.
- Various arguably avoidable prisoner suicides and deaths in prisons throughout the UK.
- The avoidable murder of Mr Tarek Chowdhury whilst in immigration detention at Heathrow.
- Clinical failures and delays by the ambulance service which caused the misdiagnosis, delayed treatment and death of a man suffering heart failure.
- Systemic and clinical failures in the care of a young father who was passed between various GPs and hospitals over a short time period which caused his death through undiagnosed bowel ischaemia.
- Failures in primary and secondary care which caused the death of a young man in a persistent vegetative state through the mismanagement of his PEG feeding system.
- The negligent discharge of a young mother from inpatient psychiatric care because of inadequate risk assessment which led to her committing suicide in front of her children.

## Administrative and Public Law

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This is a growing area of Sophie's practice, through her representation of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority in the First-Tier and Upper Tribunals, and the High Court. Sophie has a particular interest in modern slavery offences. She also represents a growing number of clients in claims and appeals relating to the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

Sophie appeared in:

- The Administrative Court on behalf of the Ministry of Defence in a judicial review, led by [Ben Collins KC](#), concerning alleged age discrimination in how the Army's Terms of Service apply to under 18's (*Child Soldiers International v Secretary of State for Defence [2015] EWHC 2183 (Admin)*); and
- The Court of Appeal, led by [Simon Cheetham KC](#), in a case concerning the interpretation of a term of the Civil Service Pension Scheme (*Ellis v Cabinet Office [2015] Pens LR 379*).

## Professional Recommendations

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"Sophie provides clear and concise advice and has a great eye for detail."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2024**

"Sophie is absolutely excellent: she has very good tactical awareness in putting a case together. She is also able to empathise well with clients."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2024**

"She has the benefit of being extremely clever and incredibly empathetic. She is a strategic thinker who always gets great results, and is well prepared for conferences and hearings."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2024**

"Sophie is an all-rounder, seemingly capable of dealing with any clinical negligence case, and always to a very high standard."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2024**

"She is thorough and thoughtful in her conclusions on cases and instantly puts the client at ease with her clear knowledge and expertise ultimately leading to successful outcomes."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2024**

"Sophie is brilliant with clients, making them involved and empowered whilst guiding them through difficult and complex medicine and legal reasoning."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2024**

"Sophie gives detailed and practical advice. She is approachable and very responsive. She has impressive attention to detail and fantastic quantum skills."

#### **The Legal 500 2024**

"Sophie is simply one of the most impressive clinical negligence juniors. She is meticulously prepared, a clear thinker and a persuasive advocate. She has developed an outstanding practice in claimant clinical negligence work."

#### **The Legal 500 2024**

"She gives straightforward, intelligent and practical advice. She is very good with clients as she is empathetic but also has a good sense of authority. She approaches cases in a helpful, positive and practical way."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2023**

"Sophie's quantum skills and exceptional attention to detail make her stand out."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2023**

"Sophie is highly astute. She is an excellent tactician."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2023**

"She has an astonishing work ethic."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2023**

"Sophie is able to put clients at ease in what can be a very difficult and stressful situation for them."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2023**

"Sophie is one of the most impressive junior barristers doing claimant clinical negligence work at the Bar, with an impressive work ethic."

#### **The Legal 500 2023**

"Sophie is incredibly impressive. She is a dedicated and efficient worker. She achieves wonderful results for claimants in clinical negligence claims." "Sophie is a consummate professional- an astute and thorough advocate, always well prepared and knowledgeable but also empathetic, sensitive and warm with clients. Clients feel readily assured that they are in safe hands."

#### **The Legal 500 2022**

"She is incredibly bright, always thoroughly prepared and approachable to both clients and solicitors. She is also very tactically astute." "Always on top of the issues and her emotionally intelligent approach means that clients respond well to her." "Provides a very high standard of opinions and advocacy in court." "She has excellent quantum skills and very good attention to detail."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2022**

"She develops a good rapport with her clients which helps put them at ease. She's also very impressive on her feet and her written work is exceptional." "She's very brave, very quick and works to a high standard." "Very approachable and thorough." "A very good advocate. She is clear and fair."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2021**

"Sophie is technically excellent, with strong legal knowledge far beyond her years call. She is loved by clients given her personable, courteous and compassionate nature. However, get her in the courtroom or in a negotiation with the other side and she is a force to be reckoned with." "Combines strong legal knowledge and technical ability with excellent client skills."

#### **The Legal 500 2021**

"Identifies the issues quickly and has a lively manner with clients. She's sensitive in her dealings with them while giving clear and sound advice." "Very impressive, thorough and detailed. A safe pair of hands." "She's intelligent, clear, approachable and very quick in responding to instructions. She's good at dealing with both clients and experts."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2020**

"A very fine advocate who is very good on her feet." "Very client-friendly and very personable." "Very meticulous in the way she drafts documents, very engaging with clients and very proactive."

#### **Chambers & Partners 2019**