



# Darron Whitehead

Year of Call: 1995

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## Introduction

Having returned home to the Midland Circuit in 2000, Darron has established a busy practice specialising solely in criminal law. Always in demand, he has earned a reputation for being thorough, approachable and persuasive in his approach to each new instruction. He receives both publicly and privately funded work, with his practice leaning in favour of representing those accused as his reputation for success at trial continues.

His case load reflects a broad range of serious offences varying in complexity & gravity. Regular instructions involve offences of murder, including both well planned or spontaneous acts of killing by individuals as well as gang related offences, child homicides, manslaughter and gross negligence manslaughter, serious violent assaults, cases of kidnap and torture, firearms and armed robbery, large scale football match disorders, prison riots and mutiny, matrimonial & stranger rape and other serious sexual offences, large scale undercover police operations targeting importation and supply of drugs, and most recently high profile media cases involving celebrities behaving badly.

He has been led by Queens Counsel on numerous occasions in complex and multifaceted cases before High Court Judges. He too has led Junior advocates in similar cases lasting many weeks at trial. Darron has accumulated considerable experience in the Court of Appeal, presenting and responding to appeals against conviction, sentence and rulings of law.

Darron is a Grade 4 \* prosecutor (highest grade) and Pupil Supervisor. He is a member of the Criminal Bar Association.

## Misconduct in Public Office/Celebrities

Darron has developed a niche area of his practise involving the prosecution and defence of individuals who hold positions in public office / celebrity status. There is an increasing awareness of the roles played by and actions of officials and famous people within society. This has led an equal increase in the investigations of such individuals who otherwise thought they were beyond the reach or repercussion for the decisions they take. High profile cases have included:

- R .v. X (2017) [Wolverhampton] – successfully defended a Home Office Employee accused of abusing his position by facilitating the entry of a family member without appropriate documentation or Visa's.
- Op Dulwich (2015) – [Stafford] – successfully prosecuted a serving Police Officer who was obtaining covert and confidential information from the Police Intelligence System, which he sold in return for sexual favours. The leaked material was sold in turn to a drug dealer hoping to stay one step ahead of his rival gangs and the police.
- R .v. K and others (2013) [Guildford] – successfully defended a member of a popular music group accused of starting and being involved in a brawl on a petrol station forecourt following a gig.
- R .v. P (2012) [Worcester] – defended a serving female prison officer who began sexual relationships with multiple prisoners serving long term sentences. Her motives appeared to be driven by fascination and thrill seeking, but did result in the smuggling of mobile telephones and top up cards to inmates seeking to exact revenge on those that led to their incarceration.

# Drugs and Money Laundering

Darron has both prosecuted and defended cases involving large scale importation, preparation and distribution of class A and B drugs. Such cases invariably involve the understanding of covert observations and recording by undercover officers. His quick understanding of roles played and chronology of events have allowed him to secure best results for those he represents. He has been involved in the following Operations of late:

- R .v. Z (2018) [Birmingham] – successfully defended money laundering allegations after a 10-week trial which received National media coverage as the case involved the police crushing a new Ferrari.
- Operation Olly (2018) [Birmingham] – complex case prosecution of a man dealing in stolen and cloned cars and cleaning money through bank accounts and property portfolios.
- R .v. BB (2018) [Stafford] – 18 defendants prosecuted for the distribution of class A drugs in Staffordshire
- R .v. K (2018) [Mold] – defended the mastermind behind multiple cannabis growing factories hidden in the Welsh Hills which produced tons of product over a 4-year operation.
- R .v. W (2017) [Stafford] – defended a member of an organised crime group storing and supplying class A and B drugs across 4 counties.
- Operation Piaffe (2015) – [Birmingham] – successfully prosecuted a gang of men who had built a chemical factory in a residential area in order to prepare, package and distribute class A drugs from their safe house. Substantial amounts of cash were recovered from concealed holds within the property and vehicles being used.
- Operation Camper (2015) [Birmingham] – defending one of 42 men trapped by undercover police officers buying drugs directly from them on the streets of Birmingham.
- Operation Toulouse (2014) [Birmingham] – defended a man who whilst serving a custodial sentence for drug dealing, established a network of covert mobile telephones hidden inside the prison in order to arrange the production and supply of drugs.
- R .v. J (2014) [Gloucester] – defended a man, who for the second time, created an online website to import and export Steroids. With increasing demand and turnover of £100k's, he established a factory to prepare massive quantities of vials and stock.
- Operation Omaha (2014) [Birmingham] – successfully prosecuted ten men using a warehouse and florist shops to disguise their criminal activity of importing tons and tons of Cannabis from Holland in to the UK via lorries and the docks. Covert cameras and recording devices secured their convictions.

# Fraud, Business and Financial Crime

Darron has been instructed on several complex cases requiring the preparation, understanding and analysis of evidence in excess of 50,000 pages. His patience and ability to simplify complicated financial affairs in order to best assist clients has resulted in repeated instructions. Examples of such cases include:

- R .v. Hoang (2017) [Stafford] – successfully defended a Vietnamese National accused of child trafficking and offences under the Modern Slavery Act. This was the first prosecution under the new Act and received national media attention as well as being a BBC documentary.
- R .v. H (2017) [The Old Bailey] – defended an Autistic youth with advanced computer skills who hacked into Talk Talk stealing personal data at the cost of £77m to the company.
- R .v. G and others (2015) – [Coventry] – defended a manager working for British Gas accused of selling over £110k of stock and assets belonging to his employer to scrap metal dealers.
- R .v. R and others (2014) [Birmingham] – ghost companies were set up purportedly supplying agency workers for Government contracts to relay motorways and gantries. False invoices and timesheets were supplied over a period of 2 years resulting in fraud in excess of £7m.
- R .v. A and others (2013) [Birmingham] – an entire family embarked on a £1/2m online fraud whereby they would repeatedly advertise high value goods on Gumtree, but failed to deliver even where individuals had paid in cash. Their financial gains were concealed by an intricate web of sub accounts.

# Homicide (Murder and Manslaughter)

Darron has been involved in several high profile and emotive murder and manslaughter cases where he has either been led by very experienced Queens Counsel, or has conducted the case himself leading other Junior members of the bar. Notable cases include:

- R .v. EC (2018) [Stafford] – defending the mother of a 5-week baby accused of murder, where the cause of death remains unknown.
- Operation Epsilon (2018) [Birmingham] – prosecuting a house owner for the manslaughter of his roommate as the pair had been preparing drugs and blew up the block of flats.
- R .v. Gz (2018) [Stafford] – prosecuting a lorry driver who ploughed into a car on the M6 killing 5 members of the same family.
- R .v. F (2018) [Stafford] – prosecuted the estranged partner who concealed a knife in a car and then stabbed the victim multiple times whilst she was driving whilst their 10 yr old son in the back.
- R .v. V (2018) [Stafford] – defended a 20 yr old Romanian National who cut the throat of his 16 yr old estranged girlfriend
- R .v. IL (2017) [Birmingham] – successfully defended the alleged driver of a car involved in a drive-by shooting in the town centre.
- R .v. SH (2016) [Stafford] – successfully defended the ex-girlfriend of the deceased who was accused of manslaughter and assisting an offender to dispose of the body.
- R .v. J (2016) [Birmingham] – prosecuted and convicted this defendant of attempted murder having point blankly fired a gun at a rival's head whilst sitting in a car. Complex case involving facial mapping and clothing recognition, anpr tracking and covert telephone recordings after the incident.
- R .v. PM (2016) [Stafford] – successfully defended one of five men who followed, ambushed and allegedly murdered a rival gang member, all being captured on CCTV.
- R .v. C & C (2015) [Birmingham] – successfully prosecuted the manager of a superstore was having an affair with another employee. When her demands of exclusivity were made, he and his brother devised a plan to lure the deceased to an address in Leicester, where they killed her using chloroform and buried the body in an allotment, before attempting to cover their tracks by sending false text messages and disposing of cars and clothes. Each defendant received minimum 30-year sentences of imprisonment.
- R .v. D (2015) [Stafford] – successfully defended a man accused of pushing a drug addict out of a moving car following the deceased's failure to settle a debt owed to the driver of the car.
- R .v. H (2014) [Worcester] – defended a man who had consumed heroin during the course of a night, triggering delusional belief that others were trying to get him, including his pregnant fiancé. Having locked down the house, he stabbed the deceased 65 times using different weapons in front of their 2-year-old daughter.
- R .v. W (2014) [Birmingham] – prosecuted a law student for attempted murder who invited into his home three individuals from the local area who had been bragging about their criminal past, in order to use them as test subjects. When he realised they had turned the tables on him and were stealing from the house, he stabbed one of the burglars in the head leaving the tip of the knife embedded in his brain.
- R .v. L (2014) [Birmingham] – defended the father of a 6-week-old baby accused of manslaughter by beating and shaking this child to death whilst asleep in her cot.

## Crime

Darron has an established busy criminal practice appearing regularly in Birmingham, Wolverhampton & Stafford. His repeated success in trial, whether defending or prosecuting, has resulted in a full diary throughout the year. Amongst regular instructing solicitors, Darron has a reputation for thorough preparation of case papers as soon as they are delivered, providing concise advice and guidance as to the progression of the case in hand. He strives to maintain continuity throughout the court process, creating confidence with each client and reassurance that each case is being prepared and presented to a high standard of professionalism.

His popularity and experience is reflected by his current instructions involving cases of multiple cases of murder, including pre-planned acts of killing [R .v. C & C 2015 – two brothers planned and poisoned their mistress and disposed of her body in an allotment], spontaneous acts of homicide [R .v. H 2014 – the accused stabbed his finance 65 times whilst pregnant and in front of their 2 year old son] and gang related revenge or honour killings [R .v. M 2015 – 5 disguised men set a trap to murder a colleague outside his front door].

Darron has also defended and prosecuted offences of attempted murder [R .v. W 2014 – a burglar was stabbed in the head by a law student as he tried to escape from the targeted address] and manslaughter [R .v. D 2015 – the deceased owed a drug debt and was pushed out of a moving vehicle]. Other cases reflect serious sexual allegations, including stranger rape [R .v. W 2015 – accused waited for his target outside a train station before raping her repeatedly at gun point], rape within the matrimonial home, serious sexual offences against children [R .v. R 2011 – rape of a 12-year-old girl by her foster carers].

Other cases have involved the importation or sale of firearms & ammunition, armed robbery, serious violence involving kidnap and torture, undercover police operations infiltrating the importation and supply of drugs, large scale online fraud using the Gumtree website, and allegations of misconduct in public office.

## Corporate and Gross Negligence Manslaughter

Darron has been involved in a number of gross negligence manslaughter cases in this developing area of law. Such cases have required a considerable amount of detailed preparation, involving careful analysis of the evidence and wide research of the issues. Invariably Darron has found that such cases have been the subject of much media attention (see the linked notable case of R .v. Hussain), and where inevitably emotions run high for all interested parties.

## Organised Crime and Terrorism

Darron has prosecuted and defended a number of large scale cases concerning organised crime groups (OCG's), often involving ten or more defendants. His instructions invariably follow months of investigation by the prosecuting authorities, which have focused upon the activities of key individuals, their interaction with others in the planning, commission and concealment of serious criminal enterprises. Cases include:

- R .v. HH (2018) [Leicester] – defended a member of a team pulling ATM machines from 8 convenience stores during the night using explosives, stolen diggers and manitous.
- R .v. SE (2018) [Birmingham] – represented the middle man fencing converted firearms brought into the UK from Ireland.
- R .v. B (2018) [Birmingham] – able to persuade the Court not to impose the mandatory immediate period of imprisonment for a vulnerable lady who had stored firearms and ammunition at her home address having been 'cuckooed' by an organised crime group.
- R .v. N (2016) [Birmingham] – defended the owner of a professionally run brothel operating 24/7 turning over millions of pounds per year.
- R .v. P (2012) [Stafford] – successfully prosecuted an organised crime group from Birmingham that travelled to Stafford to execute the head of a rival drugs gang. They unsuccessfully tried to kidnap their victim, but managed to shoot him in the back with shotguns as he tried to escape. Voluminous mobile telephone data and cell siting secured convictions for those involved.
- R .v. G (2011) [Birmingham] – defended a member of the Outlaw biker gang for murder who was part of a bikers Chapter that identified & targeted the leader of the local Hells Angel biker gang. The deceased was tracked and shot in the head whilst riding along the M40 motorway. The motive was to steal a rival gang bikers' patch to display in their own clubhouse.
- R .v. McG (2011) [Stafford] – prosecuted a professional team of burglars who executed a ram raid of a cash sorting depot in Tamworth. Having driven through security gates, they reversed a lorry through a structural wall and stole £1.85m in 90 seconds. They fled on motorbikes. The money was never recovered. The entire case rested on the evidence of an informant granted anonymity.
- R .v. C and others (2010) [Stafford] – a team of 20 established a network of staged road traffic accidents across the country, triggering false insurance claims in excess of £1m for vehicle damage and personal injury.

# Serious Sexual Offences

Darron has developed a formidable reputation for both defending and prosecuting serious sexual offences. Such cases are particularly sensitive, often involving multiple complainants and interested parties. They invariably require a high degree of objectivity and detailed preparation, combined with patience and empathy. Recent cases include:

- R .v. H (2018) [Stafford] – defended a 17 yr old sixth form student accused of grooming and engaging in sexual activity with 14 yr old girls attending his same school.
- R .v. R (2018) [Birmingham] – Nationally and Internationally reported case of a young girl being raped at a train station before being raped again by a taxi driver on the way home later. Successfully defended the first accused.
- R .v. Od (2018) [Birmingham] – successfully prosecuted a man who had sexual activity with a child, without relying on any evidence from the alleged victim during trial.
- R .v. A and others (2017) [Stafford] – 3 brothers were accused of raping 3 sisters over 25 yrs ago.
- R .v. RC (2017) [Birmingham] – defended the oldest man (aged 101 yrs) ever to be charged with historic sexual offences against his daughters and granddaughters. The case led to new guideline being issued by the Court of Appeal as to the approach the sentencing courts should take with the elderly.
- R .v. L (2016) [Stafford] – successfully defended a student accused of rape where the complainant had visited his address with a friend.
- R .v. J (2016) [Birmingham] – successfully prosecuted an extradited man involved in the gang rape of a lady trapped inside a flat for 10 hours. Case involved complex DNA recovery from at least 10 suspects.
- R .v. P (2016) [Birmingham] – successfully defended a man falsely accused of rape by his ex-wife who was driven to prevent him having access to their child.
- R .v. W (2015) [Birmingham] – successfully prosecuted a man who waited for hours by a train station late at night in order to choose his victim. He then followed his target and at gunpoint, led her into a church yard where he repeatedly raped her.
- R .v. GP (2015) [Worcester] – prosecuting the owner of a large farming estate who has raped and sexually abused three generations, including, wives, daughters, granddaughters and family pets.
- R .v. H (2015) [Manchester] – successfully defended a student accused of rape after a one-night stand, having met a young lady at a nightclub and then returning to his apartment together.
- R .v. P (2014) [Stafford] – successfully defended a man accused of 28 counts of rape against three different girlfriends dating back to the 1980's.
- R .v. S (2012) [Stafford] – successfully defended a scout leader accused of abusing troop members over the last two decades.
- R .v. R (2011) [Wolverhampton] – defended a foster carer, who together with his wife, they would photograph their very young female residents in all sexual poses, invariably for their own sexual pleasure, but also for profit.
- R .v. D (2010) [Wolverhampton] – successfully prosecuted a serial rapist who targeted dozens of local prostitutes, holding them hostage with knives before raping them. He was driven by revenge and hatred of their occupation.
- R .v. S (2010) [Stafford] – defended the head of an elite paedophile network who was pursued and traced by the FBI in the UK. His portfolio of indecent images and videos of children being sexually abused amounted to in excess of one million items. Most of these had been specially commissioned and order by members of the group across the world.