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Alexandra Pountney

Year of Call: 2014
Telephone: 0115 947 2581

Overview

Alexandra is recognised as a leading junior in clinical negligence, inquests and inquiries and personal injury law.

She is described by directories as *"a fierce advocate who leaves no stone unturned"* and "*formidable in court"*. Alexandra is consistently praised for her client care and is recommended as *"superb with clients – empathetic and supportive, but also firm when needed. She explains complex legal and medical issues clearly*."

Alexandra enjoys a busy and fast-paced practice, where she is regularly instructed in high-value and medically complex cases. She has a skill for unpicking challenging issues of medical causation and knotty factual disputes.

Alexandra was appointed as an Assistant Coroner for South Yorkshire (West) in 2023, and she is the Head of the Inquest team at Ropewalk Chambers. She has a wealth of experience across the breadth of coronial law. She regularly appears for both families and a range of interested persons including NHS Trusts, GPs, nurses, midwives, private hospitals, care homes, insurance companies and private security services. Alexandra prides herself on taking a balanced approach to every case.

Robust in oral and written advocacy, Alexandra has an eye for details. She is adept at working her way through voluminous documents and conducting conferences with lay medical witnesses and experts across a range of disciplines. Her practice includes a healthy mix of Claimant and Defendant work which enables her to find the best route to a successful outcome for every client. She prides herself on being approachable and reliable for both professional and lay clients.

Alexandra was involved in the landmark case of Zurich -v- Hayward [2017] AC 142. She regularly advises and provides representation in cases involving allegations of fraud or fundamental dishonesty.

Before coming to the Bar, Alexandra worked in a busy clinical negligence team at a firm of solicitors. She has also worked for the Criminal Cases Review Commission, where she drafted submissions to the Ministry of Justice on proposed legislative changes to the law of joint enterprise.

Alexandra studied Philosophy and Politics at the University of Southampton. She completed the GDL and BPTC at the University of Law, where she was awarded the BPTC Advocacy Prize for obtaining the highest advocacy marks in her year. She is a Benefactors' Scholar of the Middle Temple and received the Kalisher Internship Award in recognition in of her potential to succeed at the Bar.

Away from the Bar, Alexandra's interests include yoga and hiking with her young family (and mischievous terriers) in tow.

Expertise

Personal Injury

Alexandra is approachable, diligent and client focussed. She has developed a demanding and successful personal injury practice. Alexandra is regularly instructed in high value cases, including cases valued up to £1 million. Clients often request Alexandra for her pragmatic, sensitive and human approach.

She represents Claimant and Defendants in disputes, involving:

- employers' liability (including abuse, assault and harassment);
- public liability;
- occupiers' liability;
- defective premises;
- product liability;
- animals & equine;
- road traffic accidents (including insurance fraud); and
- claims against local authorities (including Highways Act 1980 claims).

Experienced in personal injury litigation, Alexandra has pursued and resisted allegations of fraud and fundamental dishonesty on behalf of Claimants and Defendants.

Alexandra has a broad paperwork practice. She accepts instructions for advice work and drafting. She prides herself on her ability to give firm, fair and focussed advice. Alexandra is reliable, and will turn around paperwork quickly, efficiently and accurately.

Examples of Alexandra's work include:

- Advice in a fatal accident claim involving a death at work as the result of defective work equipment. This claim was valued in excess of £500,000 and settled with Alexandra's input.
- Advice and representation in a fatal accident claim arising out of a road traffic accident. The deceased was survived by his wife and young child. This claim involved dependency claims in excess of £750,000.
- Advising a nationwide insurance company on the policy position in relation to claims for personal injury arising out of acts of terrorism.
- Advice in a claim involving historic abuse at a SEN residential school. This claim involved competing medical evidence from 3 different disciplines with real challenges over medical causation.
- Representation and advice in a claim involving the physical abuse and false imprisonment of a child at a school by a teaching assistant.
- Advice in an employers' liability claim arising out of a serious assault on a care assistant by a service user at a facility for people with complex care needs. As a result of the assault, the Claimant sustained significant physical and psychological injuries. With Alex's input, settlement was achieved before trial.
- Advice and representation in a serious injury claim arising out of a sky-diving accident. This case involved the input of an aviation expert, alongside medico-legal experts. This claim was successful after a multi-day trial.
- Advice in an employers' liability claim arising out of a serious assault on a shop assistant when she was the victim of an armed robbery at work. The Claimant suffered severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, alongside various other injuries. With Alex's input, settlement was achieved before trial.
- Advice and drafting in a serious injury claim worth over £500,000 against the Motor Insurers' Bureau. With Alex's input,

settlement was achieved before trial.

Alex is willing to accept instructions on a pro bono or conditional fee basis, where appropriate.

Clinical Negligence

Alexandra is recognised as a "leading junior" in clinical negligence work by the Legal 500. She is praised for her "*thorough and methodical*" approach and that she "*carefully teases out information in a deliberate and effective manner*."

Alexandra knows that clinical negligence work is often emotive for all parties involved. She prides herself on her empathetic approach to all of her clinical negligence work, whether she represents Claimants or Defendants. She is proud to have achieved recognition as counsel who is "*trusted by her lay clients*" and as able to guide clients "*through difficult times with empathy, compassion and sound legal advice.*"

As a result of her specialism in coronial law, Alexandra is often instructed in fatal clinical negligence claims, including surgical negligence, mental health claims and delay in diagnosis. This has resulted in a sound and practiced knowledge of claims under the Fatal Accidents Act 1976 and the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1934. Alexandra accepts instructions in cases of all values and is commonly instructed in cases with a value of up to £1 million.

Alexandra regularly deals with cases involving complex arguments over medical causation, issues of informed consent, secondary victim claims and claim involving breach of Art. 2 of the ECHR.

Examples of Alexandra's work include:

- Advising, drafting and representation in multiple surgical negligence claims involving a Consultant Gastroenterologist performing endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography. These cases were unusually complex in that there were multiple fatalities arising from procedures performed by the same surgeon over a number of weeks. Medical causation was knotty, as some of the patients were acutely unwell on admission. Not only were these claims all successful, but the outcome resulted in the Trust making changes to their ERCP outpatient pathway for future patient safety.
- Advising and drafting pleadings in a delay in lung cancer diagnosis leading to unnecessary invasive treatment.
- Advising and representation in a case involving failure to diagnose and treat ectopic pregnancy leading to the avoidable death of a young female.
- Advising and representation in a case involving lymphocytic myocarditis in a child resulting in a terminal cardiac event. Previous hospital admissions with RSV had not revealed any foreseeable cardiac issues.
- Advising and representation in a claim arising from failure by a GP to diagnose Strep A in a child, resulting in PICU admission which ultimately led to death.
- Advising and drafting in surgical negligence claim involving Consultant Orthopaedic surgeon. The patient was left with permanent disfigurement to a lower limb, resulting in a value claim for future losses.
- Advising in a birth injury case resulting in cerebral palsy.
- Advising in a birth injury claim resulting in a severe physical and psychiatric injury to the mother. The claim was predicated on the basis that as a result of the injury, she would not go on to have more children.
- Advising in a delay in diagnosis of cauda equina claim resulting in permanent urological and spinal injuries.
- Advising and representation in a claim involving legal argument over the break in the chain of causation in a case where the patient suffered serious traumatic injuries sustained in a fall from height. The major trauma centre treating the patient were said to have acted in such a way that their conduct broke the chain of causation and ultimately led to the death of the patient.
- Advising and representation in the claim against a private mental health hospital where a delayed admission caused by an administrative error allowed a patient with a foreseeable risk of suicidal action to take their own life. This involved a significant dependency claim for a young family.
- Advising and representation in a claim against a secure mental health unit at a NHS hospital. The patient ultimately

killed herself after being allowed to abscond whilst under a s.2 MHA and obtain, smuggle in and use contraband articles to take their own life.

As a result of her broad experience, Alexandra regularly conducts conferences with experts across a range of disciplines. Alexandra is also commonly instructed to conference with medical professionals who are lay witnesses.

She accepts instructions to advise, draft pleadings and provide representation across a broad range of clinical negligence work. Her approachable, diligent and client-focus means that she will provide friendly, pragmatic and sensitive advice in all cases in which she is instructed.

Alex is willing to accept instructions on a pro bono or conditional fee basis, where appropriate.

Inquests

Alexandra sits as an Assistant Coroner for South Yorkshire (West) where she hears cases across the full range of coronial law, including death at work, clinical death, death in custody, road traffic accident death and industrial disease. Alexandra is experienced at sitting with a jury on death in custody cases, including death in police custody and detention under the Mental Health Act 1983. Sitting as a coroner gives Alexandra a special insight into the challenges of the coronial system for families and all interested persons, that she carries across into her practice at the bar.

In chambers, Alexandra is the Head of the Inquest team, and she is recognised as a "leading junior" in inquests and inquiries by the Legal 500. In court, Alexandra has been described by the directories as "*formidable*" and a "*a fierce advocate who leaves no stone unturned. She is thorough and methodical in her approach and carefully teases out information in a deliberate and effective manner."* She is stand-out in her witness handling, and client's have recommended her for this, stating that "*Her questioning of witnesses is forensic and her grasp of the issues in cases is astute.*

In contrast, in conference with her clients, Alexandra is praised for her "*empathetic approach"* and is said to be "*excellent at conferences with experts and clients. She is able to extract and dissect the key elements from the medical evidence and then apply the law.*"

She has a wealth of experience across the breadth of coronial law. She regularly appears for both families and a range of interested persons including NHS Trusts, GPs, nurses, midwives, private hospitals, care homes, insurance companies and private security services. Alexandra prides herself on taking a balanced approach to every case.

Alex welcomes instructions from families and other interested parties for inquests and pre-inquest reviews. She is willing to accept instructions on a pro bono or conditional fee basis, where appropriate.

Disease

Alex has a busy industrial disease practice. She is regularly instructed by both Claimants and Defendants across a broad spectrum of industrial disease work. She has experience of claims involving:

- noise-induced hearing loss (including claims for acoustic shock);
- Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome;
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome;
- asbestos-related chest disease;
- Repetitive Strain Injury;
- COSHH (including industrial asthma and dermatitis); and
- occupational stress.

She is regularly instructed to advise pre-trial on complex issues of medical causation, breach of duty and limitation. Her practical approach is an asset in this area of practice. Alex has experience of conducting conferences with medical experts,

engineers and lay clients. She accepts instructions to advice in conference both by telephone and in person (including site visits). She is also experienced in claims brought on behalf of a deceased's estate.

Examples of her recent work include:

- Advice and drafting in a HAVS case involving a young Claimant, with a value of approximately £250,000.
- Representing a Defendant in a claim for acoustic shock as a result of an explosion on a construction site.
- Advice and drafting for a Claimant in an industrial dermatitis case against a well-known restaurant franchise.
- Representing a Defendant in a claim for asbestosis as a result of historic exposure to lagging in boiler rooms.

Counter Fraud

Having assisted in the landmark *Supreme Court decision of* ***Zurich Insurance Company v Hayward*** [2017] AC 142, Alexandra is regularly instructed to advise and represent Defendants in cases involving suspected exaggerate, fraud or dishonesty, relating to both injury and alleged financial losses. She has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and dishonesty and is often instructed for her robust approach throughout the litigation process.

Alexandra has experience, and is happy to receive instructions, all aspects of suspected fraudulent claims: motor claims (including fraud rings, inflated or fictitious credit hire and storage claims, phantom passengers, staged accidents, and low velocity impact claims), employers' and public liability claims.

Notable Cases

- ***Inquest touching on the deaths of Mr William Doleman, Mrs Anita Burkey, Mr Peter Sellers, Mrs Carol Cole.*** This case has attracted media attention. To read an example article, click here.
- **Inquest touching on the death of Phoenix-Jo Martin Wyn Jones.** An inquest into the death of a premature baby who died of a catastrophic brain bleed, but where there were findings of non-accidental injury in the form of rib fractures. The matter attracted local media interest. To read an example article, please click here.
- ***Zurich v Hayward.*** Alex assisted on what started off as a relatively standard personal injury action that, by reason of the unusual factual development of the evidence and its journey through the Courts, gave rise to an important decision of principle in relation to personal injury actions involving fraud.

Appointments

- Assistant Coroner for South Yorkshire (West)

Professional Memberships

- Personal Injuries Bar Association (PIBA)
- Nottinghamshire Law Society (NLS)

Education

- BA (Hons), Philosophy & Politics, University of Southampton
- Graduate Diploma in Law, University of Law
- Bar Professional Training Course, University of Law

Recommendations

"Alex is a fierce advocate who leaves no stone unturned. She is thorough and methodical in her approach and carefully teases out information in a deliberate and effective manner. Alex is also superb with clients – empathetic and supportive, but also firm when needed. She explains complex legal and medical issues clearly."

- The Legal 500 2025

"Alex is formidable in court whilst remaining courteous and professional. Her questioning of witnesses is forensic and her grasp of the issues in cases is astute. She clearly has a strong relationship with her instructing solicitors and is trusted by her lay clients."

- The Legal 500 2025

"Alexandra has the ability to put families at ease and guide them through difficult times with empathy, compassion and sound legal advice. She is calm, collected and concise whilst ensuring that the necessary information is elicited from the witness."

- The Legal 500 2024

"Alexandra is a clear and confident advocate. She is excellent at conferences with experts and clients. She is able to extract and dissect the key elements from the medical evidence and then apply the law. Her pleadings are succinct, enabling a clear understanding of the legal position taken."

- The Legal 500 2024

"Alexandra has an ability to put families at ease and guide them through what is a very difficult time with empathy, compassion and sound legal advice is very good."

- The Legal 500 2024

"Alexandra is an extremely professional and reliable counsel who never fails to impress with her mastery of the brief and, likewise, her empathetic approach to clients."

- The Legal 500 2023

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