



James Lofthouse

Head of the 15 NBS Prosecution Team.

James has a heavyweight practice specialising in the prosecution of homicide and serious violence, rape and child sexual abuse and organised crime, particularly multi-handed cases. James is happy to be contacted by those who instruct him at all hours and can provide urgent written advices and arguments as and when they are required.

While principally a highly-skilled jury advocate, he is equally at home in the appellate courts, and is particularly well-regarded for his knowledge of the law, his lucid written advocacy, his coolness under fire and his capacity quickly to absorb and master huge amounts of documentary and electronic material.

James is a seasoned criminal advocate who is frequently instructed as a leading junior, although he is just as often instructed to run large and complicated cases alone. He conducted his first four murder briefs as sole prosecution counsel and is regularly instructed in opposition to silks.

He is a Grade 4 prosecutor and is on the Rape and Child Sex Abuse List for the CPS in London and the SE. In recent years, James has been instructed to advise the CPS pre-charge in a substantial number of complex and highly sensitive cases, ranging from attempted murder by arsenic poisoning to serious sexual allegations. James regularly receives instructions from various CPS Special and Complex Casework Units and is one of the Flying Squad's counsel of choice. He was one of two principal counsel instructed to prosecute the vast majority of Crown Court trials resulting from the various student and TUC demonstrations of 2010/2011.

While now a specialist criminal advocate, James enjoyed a wide-ranging common law practice for many years and therefore has extensive experience of a variety of practice areas, including immigration and asylum appeals, family (both children and financial), housing, employment, personal injury and trusts. His many years in civil practice have finely honed his drafting skills and give a particular edge to his written advocacy.

James is an experienced recorder who, in the Crown Court, is authorised to try serious sexual offences. Additionally, given that he also sits as a family judge, James has particular experience with regard to applications to the Family Court for disclosure of material into criminal proceedings. James has been an accredited Pupil Supervisor for over 15 years and has mentored a host of pupils through to tenancy and on to successful careers at the bar.

Qualifications

BA (Hons.) Law – Durham
Public Access qualified

Professional Associations

Criminal Bar Association
SE Circuit
Kent Bar Mess

Appointments

Recorder (2019)

Notable Cases

Murder and Attempted Murder

R v DH & MF (2022) – Reading CC – murder. James led Dominic Benthall and both Defendants had silks and juniors. Guilty pleas, including manslaughter, on day of trial.

R v SW & others (2021) – Kingston CC – attempted murder. James led Siobhan Molloy in 5-handed gang-related stabbing. Extensive bad character gang/drill music evidence admitted and 3 of 5 Defendants convicted of attempted murder (and a fourth of s18) after trial.

R v MJ (2020) – St Albans CC – murder. Instructed as sole prosecution counsel in allegation of murder of mother by her 17 year old son. Defendant had silk and junior. Guilty plea to murder shortly before trial.

R v CP (2018) – St Albans CC – attempted murder. Defendant was accused of deliberately running over his sister following a family dispute.

R v MA (2018) (2015) – Lewes CC – murder. Sole counsel prosecuting silk and junior. Defendant, dealing on a “county line”, stabbed one of his customers. Guilty plea to manslaughter.

R v SZ (2017) – Luton CC – attempted murder. Father threw his 6 month old baby out of a first floor window in a cannabis-induced psychosis.

R v AM & others (2017) – St Albans CC – conspiracy to murder. Led by David Aaronberg KC in his last case before going to the circuit bench. Complex 6-handed conspiracy to murder where intended victim absented himself from proceedings and much turned on interpretation of cell-site, ANPR and expert evidence regarding rare and distinctive shotgun cartridge wadding. The case attracted national as well as extensive local press coverage. After David escaped to the bench, James successfully resisted the appeals against conviction of all 4 Defendants who were convicted of conspiracy to murder, including AM, who alleged jury bias, and whose appeal involved contested oral evidence heard by the Court of Appeal from one of the jurors, his father and the Appellant’s parents. In 2023 James also successfully resisted a further appeal against sentence by AM relating to a post-sentence diagnosis of ASD.

R v MK (2017) – Old Bailey – attempted murder. Prosecution of woman accused of attempting to poison her husband with arsenic, one of only a handful of such cases in the last 50 years.

R v MM (2016) – Blackfriars CC – attempted murder. Defendant stabbed a fellow teenager in the street in revenge for his “snitching” to police over an earlier incident at school.

R v GP (2016) – Lewes CC – murder. Sole counsel prosecuting silk and junior. The “Battle Tackle murder”. Following receipt of James’s Opening Note, the Defendant, who had been running a defence of loss of control, pleaded guilty to murder at trial.

R v EA (2016) – Maidstone CC – murder. Instructed as sole counsel to prosecute “the Swanley murder” where Defendant, a London drug-dealer, ran over and killed one of 2 men he said were robbing him.

R v GM & others (2015) – Old Bailey – 3-handed attempted murder and possession of firearm with intent to endanger life. A shooting in broad daylight in NW London.

R v AD (2014) – Wood Green CC – attempted murder. Mentally disturbed Defendant stabbed her mother through the stomach while she lay sleeping with the Defendant’s 6 year old autistic brother. Voluminous diary entries setting out the Defendant’s violent fantasies and extensive psychiatric evidence.

R v RB (2013) – Isleworth CC – attempted murder. Opposed by silk in trial resulting from an unprovoked street attack which left victim with significant permanent head injuries.

R v CJ (2011) – Croydon CC – attempted murder. Instructed to prosecute stabbing of mini-cab driver on Saturday before trial with papers only received on the day of trial. Despite the Judge trying to give the Defendant a route to self-defence, after a forensic dissection of his earlier account, James forced him to re-adopt and commit to an earlier answer in cross-examination and he was unanimously convicted.

Serious Sexual Crime

R v GL (2023) – Guildford CC – instructed to prosecute alleged rape of serving police officer. Trial due to commence in Nov 2023.

R v ZA (2023) – Wood Green CC – prosecution of youth for serial sexual assaults of women. Guilty pleas to all counts but a complex sentencing exercise in which James was required to offer formal advice in relation to a possible A-G's Reference.

R v SD (2023) – Isleworth CC – prosecution of historic sex allegations where Defendant represented by a silk. Hung jury in Jan 2023. Retrial due to commence in Nov 2023.

R v ML & JL (2022) – Maidstone CC – prosecution of husband and wife in respect of his historic and more recent familial sexual abuse of children, the former resulting in the birth of a child. Complex fitness to plead issues.

R v MB (2022) – Snaresbrook CC – prosecution of 20 years of alleged systematic rape in marriage and subsequent witness intimidation.

R v KB (2022) – Maidstone CC – prosecution of historic sexual offences where, tragically, the Defendant committed suicide on the morning of the second day of trial.

R v CF (2020) – Aylesbury CC – prosecution of historic sex allegations where Defendant represented by a silk (now a Circuit Judge).

R v MB (2019) – Croydon CC – successful prosecution of penetrative child sex offences allegedly committed in Pakistan relying solely on still photographs retrieved from Defendant's memory stick combined with facial mapping and circumstantial evidence.

R v RH (2019) – Harrow CC – prosecution of historic sex allegations where Defendant represented by a hugely experienced silk. The Judge later described James's closing speech as one of the best she had heard in the course of her career at both bar and bench.

R v AW (2019) – Isleworth CC – prosecution of assault by penetration committed by coercive and controlling partner. His expensively instructed counsel was described – in evidence – as "Britain's best barrister". She came second.

R v JS (2019) – Old Bailey – prosecution of high-profile American music and clothing entrepreneur represented (at great expense) by a silk. Guilty plea on first day of trial after earlier tendentious application to dismiss was robustly faced down.

R v AF (2018) – Reading CC – historic child sex offence trial determined by ruling on doli incapax.

R v SH (2018) – Inner London CC – successful prosecution, on a re-trial, of Defendant, who had the benefit of an intermediary, who committed serious sexual offences against the daughter of friends of his.

R v AB (2018) – Snaresbrook CC – successful prosecution of child sex offences where principal complainant was profoundly mentally disabled and barely capable of communicating.

R v NS (2018) – Lewes CC – successful prosecution, on a re-trial, of Defendant who repeatedly raped his step-daughter over a 4 year period from the age of 11/12.

R v RD (2017) – Maidstone CC – multiple pleas negotiated following arrest of Defendant on a European Arrest Warrant in relation to controlling prostitution and managing premises as brothels (linked case to R v TZ below).

R v JP (2017) – Aylesbury CC – prosecution of serving police officer, represented by a silk, for historic sexual offences against his step-daughter.

R v DD (2017) – Snaresbrook CC – multiple prosecutions of Defendant following unrelated sexual allegations made by children of his previous partners.

R v GC (2016) – Isleworth CC – successful prosecution of Defendant who had systematically raped his young step-daughter over a number of years, despite her having made and retracted the allegations previously and told police she had lied.

R v AU-M (2016) – Snaresbrook CC – secured conviction of Defendant for rape and other serious sexual offences committed on his wife's teenage sister. The Defendant had previously been acquitted of similar allegations made by his wife (in a trial James did not prosecute).

R v TZ (2016) – Maidstone CC – complex case taken as a late return. Secured convictions on multiple counts of controlling prostitution and managing 7 premises as brothels where organisers and prostitutes were all Lithuanian nationals.

R v GP (2016) – Blackfriars CC – prosecuted a senior teacher at a prestigious independent school, who was represented by an experienced silk, following allegations of historic sexual abuse made by former pupils.

R v FA (2016) – Kingston CC – prosecuted Defendant who pleaded guilty to 2 counts of raping a 12 year old girl (whom he consequently impregnated).

R v MD (2015) – Isleworth CC – Sentencing judge adopted James's characterisation of Defendant's conduct as "a campaign of rape". Disabled Defendant befriended, groomed and then filmed himself raping and abusing a number of 12 – 16 year old girls.

R v JT (2015) – Maidstone CC – Defendant, whose counsel took silk shortly afterwards, was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment after being convicted of a series of historic sexual offences against his stepdaughter.

R v CR (2015) – Canterbury CC – Defendant convicted of a series of historic sexual offences against his stepdaughter despite the only direct evidence against him coming from the complainant herself and various family members testifying on his behalf.

R v MA (2015) – Woolwich CC – Defendant convicted of rape after running defence of consent/sexsomnia on part of complainant after a night of mutual drinking and drug-taking. Respondent's Notice drafted when Defendant sought permission to appeal his conviction. Permission was refused.

R v GF (2015) – Lewes CC – Defendant, represented by silk, pleaded guilty on day of trial to 14 out of 16 counts of historic sexual offences committed against his niece when he himself was still a child.

R v RS (2014) – Wood Green CC – sexual grooming and various allegations of penetration of a 13 year old by the father of her best friend at school. Schedule of over 10,000 phone communications, family members giving evidence on both sides and managing trial severely disrupted by repeated bouts of ill-health afflicting the Defendant.

R v SP (2014) – Guildford CC – successfully prosecuted 16 year old Defendant accused of oral rape of 6 year old son of a family friend, despite lack of medical or any forensic evidence (in circumstances where one would expect to have found it) or any other corroborative evidence. Case effectively rested wholly on ABE and live-link evidence of the child complainant.

R v BT (2011) – Woolwich CC – exceptionally highly charged trial concerning allegation of assault by penetration by 54 year old Parkinson’s sufferer on his 17 year old niece and Goddaughter when she came to visit him while he was recuperating from deep brain surgery.

R v OA (2010) – Inner London CC – allegation of obtaining sexual services from a child. Required very sensitive handling of a challenging 14 year old complainant who gave evidence over 5 days in total.

Flying Squad Cases

R v BD (2016) – Old Bailey – prosecution of Defendant accused of 30 armed robberies of London bookmakers over a 13 month period.

R v JH (2016) – Snaresbrook CC – prosecution of a career armed robber. Defendant, a career armed robber on life licence, pleaded guilty on day of trial to a series of armed robberies of bookmakers.

R v JB & others (2015) – Kingston CC – 3-handed prosecution of a career armed robber and his accomplices. Further life sentences received by principal after he was convicted following trial – contested on mix of ID and duress – of 6 armed robberies committed following release on licence from a sentence of life imprisonment for previous armed robberies. James successfully resisted an appeal against conviction relying on breaches of PACE in the Court of Appeal.

R v JB & others (2015) – Isleworth CC & Old Bailey – 3-handed prosecution of attempted armed robbery. JB – previously convicted at Kingston CC (see above) – pleaded, JM was convicted after trial at Isleworth and MW after re-trial at the Old Bailey.

R v SG & others (2014) – Kingston CC – 5-handed prosecution of conspiracy to commit multiple armed robberies of a Central London casino (linked to associated allegation of honey trap murder of a “high-roller” casino customer by 2 of the 5 Defendants).

R v SB (2014) – Old Bailey – prosecution of one of London’s most notorious professional armed robbers. Further life sentences received where Defendant committed 9 armed robberies while on either temporary day release or following release on licence from a sentence of life imprisonment for over 25 previous armed robberies.

Other Complex and Serious Cases

R v WA & others (2023) – Reading CC – James led John Waller in the prosecution of a 5-handed Encrochat conspiracy relating to multi-kilo quantities of cocaine. 1 Defendant pleaded guilty relatively earlier and the other 4 all pleaded at trial.

R v LW & others (2023) – Croydon CC – Prosecution of 4-handed Class A drugs supply where multiple Defendants relying on modern slavery. One Defendant changed his pleas to guilty, even after receiving a positive conclusive grounds decision, following James’s advice that it remained in the public interest to proceed against him.

R v KW & others (2023) – Inner London CC – Prosecution of 5-handed conspiracy to supply over 10 kg of cocaine and possession of firearm.

R v JD-M (2022) – Kingston CC – Prosecution of former Olympian represented by silk for serious assault (GBH) on his girlfriend. Complex medical evidence on causation and plea to section 20 GBH entered shortly before trial.

R v DS (2022) – Snaresbrook CC – Difficult and sensitive case where Defendant killed a young man whilst driving dangerously when on bail for dangerous driving. 14 years imprisonment and a disqualification of over 24 years. James was commended by the Judge for the “exceptional” quality of the lengthy Sentencing Note he prepared.

R v KM & others (2020) – Reading CC – 6-handed firearms/drugs case.

R v MA-H & others (2019) – Southwark CC – successful prosecution of 4-handed series of robberies in London parks, including 2 offences where, in relation to one Defendant, there was no direct evidence and negative identifications.

R v AC (2019) – St Helena MC – James was appointed as a public prosecutor by the Governor of St Helena, on the advice of the CPS Criminal Justice Adviser for British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean, to take over a politically-sensitive prosecution of a senior member of the St Helena government.

R v AS (2019) – St Albans CC -Defendant charged with multiple firearms/explosives offences including possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life and 2 separate offences relating to possession of IEDs (hand grenades).

R v ES & others (2019) – Harrow CC – James led Mathew Turner (now a Circuit Judge) in 6-handed “The Wire” style prosecution of Luton-based OCD who robbed other drug dealers.

R v MA (2019) – St Albans CC – causing death by dangerous driving.

R v SG & others (2019) – Wood Green CC – James led Nicholas Cooper (currently a Justice of the Supreme Court of Tonga) in prosecution of 6-handed gang-related armed conspiracy to rob.

R v AK & others (2019) – Maidstone CC – complex 4-handed prosecution of conspiracy to facilitate illegal immigration.

R v CW (2019) – Snaresbrook CC – successful Operation Trident prosecution of Defendant in pub shooting where victim claimed he did not see who shot him and where prosecution relied solely on res gestate and hearsay evidence from a reluctant witness.

R v JK (2018) – Lewes CC – prosecution of senior care home worker accused of ill-treatment of 88-year old resident with advanced vascular dementia.

R v LN (2017) – Wood Green CC – successfully resisted application for Football Banning Order where Defendant had pleaded to affray and been clearly caught on CCTV throwing punches at rival supporters on his way to a Spurs match.

R v BR & CJ (2016) – Woolwich CC – prosecution, based almost entirely on phone and cell-site evidence, following fake kidnap plot.

R v LK (2016) – Snaresbrook CC – sensitive case involving prosecution of Defendant for mobile phone theft from a moped. The Defendant, the pillion passenger, had been seriously injured, and the rider, a promising footballer on the books of a Premier League club, killed following a police pursuit.

R v TB & others (2015) – Inner London CC – successfully prosecuted multi-handed drugs conspiracy where transaction involving 1 kg of heroin was master-minded from his prison-cell by TB, a career heroin-dealer. Case rested almost entirely on phone and WhatsApp evidence.

R v NP (2015) – Kingston CC – Defendant convicted after trial of attempted s18, criminal damage and dangerous driving when she drove her car, with her 4 young children inside, at an autistic cyclist and then into the front of a hair salon after a road rage incident. Case attracted significant coverage in the national press.

R v KL (2014) – Old Bailey – led junior in allegation of baby-shaking where sub-dural bleeding was sustained by 7 month old baby of Defendant of positive good character. Case rested almost entirely on exceptionally complex medical evidence. Guilty plea on day of trial.

R v BC (2014) – Inner London CC – Defendant charged with multiple counts of attempted s18 on police officers after trying to drive his way out when boxed in by police cars after a pursuit. Within seconds of surrounding him, police officers had smashed his side window, struck him with batons, sprayed him with CS gas and discharged multiple Tasers.

R v JC & others (2014) – Croydon CC – prosecution of prominent South London scrap metal merchant. After a history of failed prosecutions by others, James secured convictions on all counts of converting criminal property and receiving stolen goods.

R v OF (2014) – Old Bailey – multiple allegations of bank fraud committed by personal banker at Lloyds TSB. Case involved vast quantity of computer-generated bank records, expert handwriting evidence as well as many hours of internal CCTV footage.

R v SS & others (2013) – Old Bailey – 6-handed conspiracy to commit violent disorder involving Millwall and West Ham risk supporters arranging to use an FA Cup tie between Dagenham and Redbridge FC and Millwall as an opportunity to engage in violent confrontation at what they hoped would be a lightly policed match.

R v AM & others (2012/13) – Kingston CC/Woolwich CC – Leading junior prosecuting several multi-handed trials flowing from allegations of violent disorder at student tuition fee demonstration in December 2010. One of the Defendants was represented by a prominent silk and the trials attracted substantial national media attention.

R v EB (2012) – Woolwich CC – Operation Trident. Possession of loaded sawn-off shotgun by Defendant with previous conviction for armed robbery. Defence of duress rejected after trial.

R v OO & others (2012) – Woolwich CC – multi-handed local authority education fraud with an “inside man”.

R v BT (2012) – Croydon CC – s18 where Defendant struck a fellow reveller over the head with a meat cleaver near Sutton High Street on New Year’s Eve.

Operation Cabinet (2011/12) – Chelmsford CC – Contested production order. Acting for Essex Police in proceedings to obtain footage from various national and multinational media organisations and freelance journalists relating to the Dale Farm evictions. Succeeded at first instance against the leading silk in this esoteric and legally exceptionally challenging and nuanced field, although judge’s ruling subsequently overturned in the Administrative Court.

R v SC & BO (2010) – Inner London CC – gang-related double stabbing. Required very careful handling of reluctant young witnesses and their families and involved allegations of judicial bias.

Interests

James is married with 2 teenage sons and 2 border terriers. He reads when he can, if far less than he used to, but still finds time to enjoy travel, fine wine, good food (his wife is a professionally-trained chef), US Civil War history, politics, sport and the occasional pub quiz (with the occasional win).