

Mark Watson

Call 2011



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Mark's practice is divided into business crime, general crime, and regulatory proceedings.

He is regularly instructed in matters involving high-value fraud, cheating the public revenue, money laundering and related dishonesty offences. Mark represented the third Defendant in the largest counterfeit cigarette and hand rolling tobacco prosecution in the United Kingdom to date.

In relation to general crime, Mark is regularly instructed in matters relating to attempted murder, firearms offences, serious drug offences and violence.

In every single case, Mark takes his preparation extremely seriously, and prides himself on his persuasive and engaging advocacy.

Expertise

Crime

Mark's practice includes attempted murder, violence, arson, serious drug matters often involving modern slavery and firearms offences.

Mark is often instructed in cases which involve complicated sources of evidence such as cellsite, forensic analyses and mobile phone material. His meticulous approach is invaluable in these cases.

Notable Crime cases

[Operation Limbas \[2024\] Truro Crown Court.](#)

Mark was led by Chris Henley KC, who represented the third Defendant in a trial involving allegations of murder, manslaughter, and perverting the course of justice. The trial presented numerous issues in relation to joint enterprise.

Chris and Mark's client was acquitted of murder and manslaughter, but convicted of perverting the course of justice. She received a sentence of 15 months which meant she was immediately released from custody. Led Junior.

Additional Coverage

[The Guardian](#)

[BBC](#)

[Daily Mail](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Operation Blanca \[2023-2024\] Bristol Crown Court.](#)

Mark represented the first Defendant in an extremely large, sophisticated, and wide-ranging conspiracy involving the importation, production and distribution of vast quantities of Spice, along with money laundering offences involving over \$1 million of cryptoassets. Led Junior.

[Operation Arbus \[2022-2023\] Cardiff Crown Court.](#)

Cardiff Crown Court. Combined Operations Wisdom and Arbus into allegations of Kidnap and Blackmail where the victims were caused life changing injuries.

The evidence involves a combination of phone material, cellsite data, ANPR, CCTV and association evidence. The allegations involve offences occurring both in England and Wales. The ongoing trial involves 12 defendants. Trial one took almost four months before the jury were discharged and the Crown had yet to close it's case. Through careful argument, the Crown was not allowed to adduce evidence which would have changed the focus of the case to the Defendants' detriment. Led by [Barry Kogan](#).

[R v AW & Ors \[2021\] Inner London Crown Court.](#)

Mark represented the third Defendant, "W", in a trial involving an unusual allegation of kidnapping which began through Instagram. The case had been investigated by two Police forces and led to complex and difficult issues of disclosure and abuse of process. After a trial which lasted for two weeks, W was acquitted of Kidnapping. Junior Alone.

Operation Nines [2021] Wood Green Crown Court.

The Defendant, a well-known Grime artist, was alleged with other to have been involved and a well-established and long-running conspiracy to supply drugs. After legal argument and application, the Defendant was acquitted and a formal verdict of Not Guilty entered when the Crown offered no evidence. Junior alone.

Operation Florida [2021] Newcastle Crown Court.

The Defendant was part of an alleged conspiracy, stretching across the north of England, supplying large quantities of class a drugs and vast sums of money. Led Junior.

Operation Wozzles [2020-21] Harrow Crown Court.

Allegation of large-scale Conspiracy to commit Burglary, heavily reliant upon mobile phone analysis and cellsite evidence. After issues were raised regarding the cellsite evidence and what the Crown's evidence actually could demonstrate, the Crown reviewed its case and offered no evidence. Junior alone.

Operation Avon [2020] Leeds Crown Court.

Allegation of large-scale drugs conspiracy heavily reliant upon mobile phone analysis and cellsite evidence. Represented the second Defendant as Junior alone.

Operation Sega II [2020] Snaresbrook Crown Court.

Mark represented a Defendant in this operation, involving vast quantities of evidence such as ANPR, Mobile phone and DNA analysis, accused of being involved in a large-scale drugs conspiracy in East London. Following the service of an application to dismiss the case drafted by Mark, the Crown conceded, and the Defendant was acquitted of all matters. Junior alone.

Operation Kingmaker [2020] Reading Crown Court.

Mark was instructed as Junior Counsel defending an allegation of Attempted Murder involving firearms. The case involved vast amounts of mobile phone and cellsite analysis. BBC News, Get Reading and Somerset Live.

Business Crime & Fraud

Mark is regularly instructed in matters relating to high value fraud, cheating the revenue, money laundering, and related financial misconduct.

Mark is regularly instructed to advise pre-charge and is experienced in advising in relation to ongoing investigations and LPP-related issues. He has advised individuals in relation to investigations being conducted by the Serious Fraud Office and has experience of advising in relation to interviews under compulsion and the regime under Section 2 of the Criminal Justice Act 1987.

Mark's expertise and experience is invaluable in cases where criminal offending has arisen from taxation disputes with HMRC, and similar, related issues.

Notable Business Crime & Fraud cases

Operation Quartz [2023] – Chester Crown Court

Leading Counsel. The Prosecution alleged that five defendants were involved in a highly-organised and ruthless conspiracy to defraud people, by luring them in with an impressive and professional website advertising building services.

Mark's client was the office manager of the business.

It was alleged that this was a fraud from the outset, and that some 22 separate people and families were the victims.

The locations ranged from the North West of England to Buckinghamshire. The fraud commenced in 2016 and ran until 2018, and the investigation commenced soon thereafter.

After a two month trial, the Jury acquitted Mark's client.

Operation Hairball 2 [2020] – Sheffield Crown Court.

Mark represented the third Defendant in a case involving allegations of very high-value evasion of Excise Duty and the distribution of counterfeit cigarettes. This is the largest commercial counterfeit cigarette and hand rolling tobacco production line discovered in the United Kingdom to date. Case prosecuted by HMRC. Junior alone.

R v M & Others [2021-2022] Harrow Crown Court.

Representing the first Defendant in an allegation of conspiracy to commit arson. The Defendant, a restaurant owner, is accused of conspiring with others and engaging them to set his business on fire for him to claim the insurance money. Junior alone. Case ongoing

Op Isidor [2018-2019]

Representing a director of a company in relation to allegations of mortgage fraud and money laundering. The allegations arose from an investigation by Greater Manchester Police's economic crime unit into the activities of an organised group who had been laundering the proceeds of criminal activity, including drug-dealing, tax evasion and mortgage and property fraud. Led junior.

Operation Electron [2019]

Representing a director of a company in relation to allegations of VAT fraud and Fraudulent Trading offences brought by HMRC and Trading Standards relating to the supply of diesel and biodiesel in Sussex. Led Junior. BBC News (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-49786940>), Mynewsdesk (<https://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/hm-revenue-customs-hmrc/pressreleases/organised-crime-gang-sentenced-for-ps3-dot-5m-fuel-fraud-2925326>), Kent Online (<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/bentley-driving-bootleggers-3-5m-fraud-213068/>) and Romford Recorder (<https://www.romfordrecorder.co.uk/news/romford-man-jailed-3-5m-organised-crime-gang-fuel-fraud-3234034>)

Operation Nike [2018] – Manchester Crown Court.

Case involving allegations of money laundering and large cash seizures conducted by officers from HMRC. Junior alone.

R v JP & Others [2018] – Isleworth Crown Court.

Fraud, money laundering and other dishonesty offences – Led junior for General Manager of company used for fraud on the Director's Loan Account and related offences. Junior Alone. Hillingdon & Uxbridge Times (<https://www.hillingdontimes.co.uk/news/16232740.fraud-offences-amounted-six-figure-sum/>) and My London (<https://www.mylondon.news/news/west-london-news/fraudster-gave-himself-bonuses-pay-14670946>)

Criminal Regulatory

Mark is regularly instructed in case prosecuted by Trading Standards, Local Councils, and related agencies, for allegations relating to financial misconduct or similar offences.

Notable Criminal Regulatory cases

Operation Quartz [2023] – Chester Crown Court

Leading Counsel. The Prosecution alleged that five defendants were involved in a highly-organised and ruthless conspiracy to defraud people, by luring them in with an impressive and professional website advertising building services.

Mark's client was the office manager of the business.

It was alleged that this was a fraud from the outset, and that some 22 separate people and families were the victims.

The locations ranged from the North West of England to Buckinghamshire. The fraud commenced in 2016 and ran until 2018, and the investigation commenced soon thereafter.

After a two month trial, the Jury acquitted Mark's client.

London Borough of Hillingdon v GC and AC – Isleworth Crown Court.

Mark is instructed to represent to first Defendant in serious allegations relating to fraudulent trading over a period of three years. Case ongoing.

Operation Electron [2019]

Representing a director of a company in relation to allegations of VAT fraud and Fraudulent Trading offences brought by HMRC and Trading Standards relating to the supply of diesel and biodiesel in Sussex. Led Junior. BBC News (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-49786940>), Mynewsdesk (<https://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/hm-revenue-customs-hmrc/pressreleases/organised-crime-gang-sentenced-for-ps3-dot-5m-fuel-fraud-2925326>), Kent Online (<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/bentley-driving-bootleggers-3-5m-fraud-213068/>) and Romford Recorder (<https://www.romfordrecorder.co.uk/news/romford-man-jailed-3-5m-organised-crime-gang-fuel-fraud-3234034>)

Asset Forfeiture & Civil Recovery

Mark has experience acting for Defendants in cases involving the seizure and forfeiture of large quantities of cash, brought by HMRC.

Professional Regulation

Mark is regularly instructed to represent registrants throughout all stages of proceedings brought by their professional regulators such as the General Dental Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, Social Work England and the Health and Care Professions Council.

Mark's professional criminal experience is invaluable when dealing with allegations relating to dishonesty and similar misconduct.

Mark is regularly instructed to represent registrants at all stages of proceedings.

Notable Professional Regulation cases

GDC v MB

Mark represented the registrant in proceedings brought by the GDC before the Professional Conduct Committee. Lincolnshire Live (<https://www.lincolnshirelive.co.uk/news/local-news/dishonest-former-boston-dentist-struck-1450599>) and the Lincolnite (<https://thelincolnite.co.uk/2018/04/boston-dentist-struck-off-for-practising-while-uninsured/>).

NMC v X

X was accused of dishonestly taking Oxycodone, belonging to a patient. The case arose after a nurse and another member of staff purported to attend the Medicine Room and saw X, in front of the Controlled Drug cupboard, drinking Oxycodone.

The allegation took place in 2017 and, following an investigation, X was dismissed and unsuccessfully appealed the dismissal. The matter was referred to the NMC in 2018 and proceedings were commenced. Following a 4 day fitness to practice hearing before a panel where the eye-witnesses and investigator gave evidence, X was acquitted of all matters.

Education

- 2009 – BA (Hons) – History
- 2011 – LLB
- 2013 – Wolfson Scholar
- 2020 – Advanced Diploma in Forensic Accounting – level 5.

Memberships

- Advocacy Trainer (Lincoln's Inn)
- Secretary of the Criminal Bar Association (2022 – 2024)
- Fraud Lawyers Association
- Representative advisory member of the UK Government's Independent Review into Disclosure of Unused Material in Criminal Cases and Fraud Offences

Publications

- **It's all relative – Mark Watson considers the decision of the Upper Tribunal in *Frensham v Financial Conduct Authority* [2021] UKUT 222 (TCC) and its impact upon the regulation of those in financial services.**

Has HMRC closed a window but opened a door?

- Certainly Uncertain: the future of prosecutions in relation to Coronavirus Support Payments
- Meet the new fraud, same as the old fraud – Mark Watson considers the latest Budget and outlines concerns about the scope for abuse and the response from the Government.
- Has NatWest awoken a sleeping lion?
- The SERCO that broke the SFO's back
- Not in the Line of Duty – Mark Watson considers the judgment in *Campbell v CPS* [2020] EWHC 3868 (Admin) and its impact on the offence of assault on an emergency worker.
- “Whose interpretation is it any way?” – YFLA newsletter February 2021 edition

Appointments

- Sport Resolutions Safeguarding Case Management Panel (SCMP)

Recommendations

2024

Legal 500

Professional Disciplinary and Regulatory Law: *‘An advocate who clearly has the trust of his client.’*

Ranked: Tier 4

Awards

