

Serena Sekhon

Call: 2021

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Solicitor



Serena Sekhon’s practice focuses on public law. She undertakes a broad range of work within this area, including judicial review, inquests, prison and police law and education.

Her experience includes judicial review of Parole Board, recall and re-categorisation decisions, judicial review and interim relief applications relating to accommodation and financial support under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, representing clients in oral hearings before the Parole Board, appearing in the First-Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability), and Article 2 and non-Article 2 inquests both with and without a jury.

She is strongly committed to access to justice and is willing to consider instructions pro bono where appropriate.

Prior to coming to the Bar, Serena volunteered at organisations including Southall Black Sisters; Intervene, a legal charity providing advice and representation to prisoners; and at HMP Brixton as a Vocalise mentor.

She has undertaken courses in peacebuilding in Colombia at Universidad de los Andes in 2017, and in international criminal justice in the context of mass atrocities in 2023 (Geoffrey Nice Foundation Masterclass, Dubrovnik). To attend the latter, she was awarded a scholarship by the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple.

Serena sits on the Bar Council’s Young Barristers’ Committee and No5 Chambers’ Equality and Diversity Committee. She regularly participates in outreach events with her Inn of Court and judges mooting competitions.

She is a voluntary member of the Sikh Human Rights Group.

Expertise

Inquests, Public Inquiries & Coronial Law

Serena has a rapidly growing inquests practice. Her recent and current instructions include:

Birmingham

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7 Savoy Court
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- Re Chenise Gregory – instructed by Chenise’s family, led by Maya Sikand KC
- Re Christopher Kapessa – inquest into the death of a Black child who was pushed into a river and drowned, instructed by Christopher’s family, led by Michael Mansfield KC
- sole counsel for an IP in a four-week inquest with a jury
- assisting Philip Rule KC on a two-week jury inquest relating to a self-inflicted death in prison custody.
- Serena’s experience includes Article 2 inquests with and without a jury, as well as non-Article 2 inquests.
- She is a member of the INQUEST Lawyers’ Group, and is happy to consider instructions on a pro bono basis where appropriate.

Public Law

Serena specialises in public law. She undertook a pupillage in public law under the supervision of Philip Rule KC.

She welcomes instructions across a wide range of public law matters.

Notable Cases

Re Christopher Kapessa

inquest, representing Christopher’s mother, led by Michael Mansfield KC. Christopher died aged 13 after drowning in the River Cynon in Wales. After a two-week inquest, the Coroner found that Christopher was deliberately pushed into the water by a 14 year old boy. The Coroner also issued a Prevention of Future Deaths Report to the Coal Authority about the prevailing absence of a water safety policy with specific steps to protect members of the public.

R (OA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2023] EWHC 2227 (Admin)

representing a pregnant asylum seeker, OA, housed for over a year in “temporary” hotel accommodation with her two children including a son with significant care and access needs. The High Court had previously granted permission to proceed with judicial review and ordered that the Secretary of State provide suitable accommodation within 9 days, which the Secretary of State failed to do, leading to the judgment cited above.

Civil Liberties & Human Rights

Serena conducts her practice with a particular focus on human rights.

She is regularly instructed on behalf of asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers in relation to various asylum support and accommodation decisions. See, for example, **R (OA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2023] EWHC 2227 (Admin)**. In that case, Serena was able to apply her knowledge of special educational needs and disability (from education law) to the asylum support context.

Serena also has experience with challenges to age assessment processes and decisions for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

During her pupillage, she assisted Philip Rule KC with drafting applications to the European Court of Human Rights.

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Education

Serena accepts instructions in a range of education law matters. She has extensive experience with school admission appeals, as well as regularly appearing in the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

She welcomes instructions relating to judicial review in the context of education.

Mental Health

Serena has experience in the First-tier Tribunal (Mental Health), representing individuals who are detained under the Mental Health Act.

Prison & Police Law

Serena is frequently instructed on behalf of prisoners in a range of prison law matters. These include:

- representing clients in oral hearings before the Parole Board
- judicial review of Parole Board decisions
- judicial review of decisions relating to the categorisation of prisoners
- judicial review of recall decisions
- civil claims in a prison context, including those arising out of the Equality Act 2010

Prior to commencing pupillage, Serena was a volunteer caseworker at Intervene, a specialist legal charity providing advice and representation to prisoners. In this role she developed experience of prison law and related matters including Rule 39 breaches, breaches of the Public Sector Equality Duty, discrimination, failures to make reasonable adjustments, failures to follow PSIs, issues with healthcare provision and mishandling of prisoner property.

Serena has experience in inquests involving criticisms of the police and prison staff.

During pupillage, Serena assisted with civil actions against the police.

Community Care

Serena's community care practice is focused around judicial review claims.

She is very frequently instructed on behalf of asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers in relation to various asylum support and accommodation decisions. See, for example, **R (OA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2023] EWHC 2227 (Admin)**.

Serena has secured a number of settlements in asylum support cases, as well as positive interim relief decisions from the Administrative Court. Her cases have included challenges to failures to provide suitable asylum support accommodation (including in a disability/care needs context), challenges to failures to implement asylum decisions and issue a BRP, challenges to the amount of financial subsistence support received by clients and challenges to location/dispersal decisions.

Serena advises and represents clients at all stages of the judicial review process, including pre-issue advice on prospects and

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preparing the claim, as well as drafting urgent applications for interim relief.

Serena is a volunteer with the Asylum Support Appeals Project, and has attended their comprehensive training in the law of asylum support.

Serena is currently being led by Ranjiv Khubber in an urgent judicial review and policy challenge relating to section 17 Children Act support in situations where a family has no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Serena also has experience representing clients in the Mental Health Tribunal.

Accreditations

- Geoffrey Nice Foundation Masterclass Scholarship (Inner Temple)
- Major Scholarship for the BPTC (Inner Temple)
- Duke of Edinburgh Entrance Award (Inner Temple)
- Postgraduate Academic Scholarship for the BPTC (City University)
- Exhibition Award for the GDL (Inner Temple)
- Dean of the Law School Scholarship for the GDL (BPP)

Memberships

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Appointments

- Appointed to the Young Barristers' Committee in September 2022

Qualifications

- BPTC, City University GDL, BPP University
- BA (Hons) History, University of Bristol, First Class

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Client Recommendations

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Solicitor – inquest

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