



Sarah-Jane Watson

Consultant Solicitor

Jurisdiction: England & Wales

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Overview

Sarah-Jane specialises in employment law and advises corporate, institutional, and individual clients on a broad range of contentious and non-contentious issues. She has a wealth of experience advising employers on grievance and disciplinary issues, performance management, sickness absence, family leave, and terminations (including redundancy processes). Senior executives turn to Sarah-Jane for advice on their dismissals, to negotiate their settlement packages, as well as advice on their contracts of employment, including restrictive covenants.

Should an employment matter proceed to Tribunal litigation, Sarah-Jane has considerable expertise in in this area and is well positioned to present, or respond to, any claim, as well as to negotiate settlement. Recent Tribunal claims she has conducted include bringing proceedings on behalf of individual clients for constructive dismissal and age discrimination, and sexual harassment and sex discrimination; and defending claims brought against her employer clients for unfair dismissal, equal pay and whistleblowing.

Sarah-Jane advises clients across a range of sectors but has extensive experience working in the education sector, with in-depth knowledge gained whilst on secondment to Imperial College London and Eton College. She advises higher education institutions on employee relations issues, scientific misconduct, safeguarding issues, and the Prevent duty, as well as advising the country's leading independent schools on employment issues, including pupil exclusions, parental complaints, and subject access requests.

I worked with Sarah-Jane over a stressful and uncertain period and she was brilliant. Not only did she deliver a great result, she also continually provided sound advice throughout the negotiation which kept me at ease. I highly recommend her.

Executive Director

Risk management, insurance brokerage and advisory company

Sarah-Jane is a highly experienced, professional employment lawyer. On a dispute with an employer, she clearly explained my options and recommended

an approach that enabled me to achieve a good settlement in a timely and cost-effective way. She responded quickly to my queries throughout the process and followed up after the settlement to ensure I received amounts owing.

Director
Competition economics consultancy firm

Clear, honest advice. Very reassuring at a difficult time.

Senior Advisor
Consultancy firm

Great advice and very client focussed.

Director
Consultancy firm

Sarah-Jane is excellent at getting to grips with legal issues, offering pragmatic advice and solutions to complex matters. She is very responsive and sensible in her advice.

Ann Kelly, Head of Employee Relations
Imperial College London

Sarah-Jane is an exceptional and talented employment lawyer. For my personal case, she took care and time to thoroughly understand the history, details and nuances of my situation before structuring her advice. After taking time to understand my situation and asking well-considered questions, she was diligent in her application of the law to the case. Throughout the process Sarah-Jane provided regular updates and never needed to be chased. I found her proactive approach to be very comforting when going through a stressful employment case. Sarah-Jane will give clear advice that is in your best interest, but balances this clearly against what is relevant for the particular case and thus managing expectations. I would recommend the services of Sarah-Jane and thank her for being my trusted adviser during a difficult time.

Individual client

Sarah-Jane is the most caring lawyer I have ever met and to me she was an angel in a dark moment in my career. Her knowledge and skills are amazing, but what makes her stand out is the compassion and empathy she shows whilst still keeping it professional and setting expectations. Her help went way

beyond just being my lawyer; she fought for me as a friend.

Individual client

Expertise

Non-contentious

- Drafting and advising on employment contracts, service agreements, consultancy agreements and internship agreements
- Drafting company policies and staff handbooks
- TUPE transfers
- All forms of family leave and pay
- Holiday and holiday pay
- Training for HR managers

Contentious

- Unfair dismissal, including constructive dismissal
- Discrimination and harassment
- Whistleblowing
- Disciplinary and grievance issues
- Performance management
- Restrictive covenants
- Breach of contract
- Redundancy
- Managing sickness absence
- Drafting, advising on, and negotiating the terms of, settlement agreements
- Dealing with and responding to subject access requests
- Conducting Tribunal litigation

Cases

General

- Advised a Brazilian public company listed on the Sao Paulo stock exchange and its subsidiaries on all employment matters arising from the £880m purchase of a UK Plc.
- Advised an employer on the termination of a director and shareholder and drafted and negotiated a complex settlement agreement.
- Advised an individual on her sexual harassment claim against her employer and negotiated a generous settlement package.
- Advised an employee on long-term sickness absence on her constructive dismissal, sex discrimination, and

bullying and harassment claims against her employer and negotiated a generous settlement package.

- Conducted Tribunal claims on behalf of a national newspaper.

Education

- Conducted a Tribunal case on behalf of a group of independent schools and successfully defended a claim made by a former employee for unfair dismissal, wrongful dismissal and religious discrimination.
- Advised a top independent school on a student exclusion, parental complaint, and dealt with a subject access request made by the parents.
- Reviewed and amended the employment sections of the statutes and regulations of a top collegiate university.
- Advised a top world-ranking London university on a TUPE transfer.
- Defended a claim against a university for unfair dismissal, disability discrimination and failure to make reasonable adjustments.

Recognition

Member of the Employment Lawyers Association

Career

- 2019** **Keystone Law** | *Consultant Solicitor*
- 2018 - 2019** **Lewis Silkin - Rockhopper** | *Senior Lawyer*
- 2010 - 2019** **Farrer & Co** | *Solicitor, then Associate, then Consultant Solicitor (including secondments with Imperial College and Eton College)*
- 2008 - 2010** **Morgan Russell LLP** | *Solicitor*
- 2008** Qualified as a solicitor
- 2006 - 2008** **Lewis Silkin LLP** | *Trainee Solicitor (including secondment to Shell International)*