

Nick Johnson KC


Call 1994 | Silk 2016



Clerks

 Ian Spencer
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Appointments

- Bar Council International Committee (2018-2022)
- North-Eastern Circuit Silk Representative on the Bar Council
- SFO KC Panel
- Deputy Head of Crime, Exchange Chambers
- Silk (2016)
- Public Access Practitioner
- Category 4 Prosecutor (2008)
- Specialist lists for Complex Crime Unit and Fraud Unit

Memberships

- Criminal Bar Association
- International Bar Association
- Fraud Lawyers Association

Education

- B.A. (Ebor) English (1st Class)
- Dip. Law B.V.C. (London)

Overview

Nick Johnson KC provides expert representation for corporates, individuals and specialist agencies in the fields of financial crime, associated regulatory work and other serious and organised crime, often with an international dimension. He has been ranked as a Leading Silk for many years for Crime (General and Fraud), Business and Regulatory Crime in the Legal 500 and has a Tier 1 Silk ranking for Financial Crime in Chambers & Partners. In 2024 a leading legal directory described him as “*a superstar: a superb advocate who meticulously prepares his cases, and has exceptional legal knowledge. He adapts beautifully to any circumstances and always finds the perfect tone.*” He is Deputy Head of Crime at Exchange Chambers.

Nick has appeared as leading counsel in some of the largest financial crime jury trials in the UK. He specialises in bribery and corruption cases, including cross-border investigations and trials. He is frequently retained to provide pre-charge and wider strategic advice. Nick also has experience of corporate fraud investigations brought by the DOJ and SEC in the United States and similar investigations and litigation in Europe, Russia/CIS and the Middle East.

In addition, Nick has extensive experience of civil fraud/recovery, economic sanctions, corporate compliance, production and freezing orders, asylum and extradition proceedings, regulatory and professional misconduct proceedings, health & safety enforcement, and inquests, acting for professionals, company officers and businesses. These proceedings often cross-over into his financial crime practice.

Notable examples of his financial crime work include representing a chartered accountant and a senior bank executive in one of the largest money laundering investigations in English legal history, where £266m cash was allegedly laundered through the NatWest bank and Dubai gold trades, giving rise to multiple ongoing prosecutions, including by the FCA. He acted for a former VP Finance in UK, US and Greek investigations into alleged corporate bribery of surgeons in a worldwide medical devices fraud. He appeared in the first ever UK jury trial of a company charged with a s.7 corporate failure to prevent bribery offence. He is currently instructed to lead for the prosecution in an alleged Ministry of Defence procurement fraud. Nick is appointed to the SFO KC Panel.

Nick continues to prosecute and defend in high-profile serious and organised crime cases. For many years he has been instructed in gangland murder cases, including defending the “Iceman Assassin” alleged to have executed prominent figures Paul Massey and John Kinsella. He has extensive experience in cases of alleged baby murder including those involving NAHI/AHT. He has defended multiple cases involving EncroChat and other encrypted devices. He prosecuted a doctor for non-consensual surgical assaults in Saint Helena. He defended a teenage girl in the killing of 7-year-old Katie Rough, a case concerning schizotypal and persecutory delusional disorders.

Complementing his work as UK barrister, Nick has worked alongside US, Russian, Greek Swiss and UAE lawyers in foreign jurisdictions. He is a contributing author of “Lissack & Horlick on Bribery and Corruption” (Lexis Nexis 3rd ed. 2020). He is the Silk Representative of the North-Eastern Circuit on the Bar Council. Nick speaks conversational Japanese and undertakes advocacy training at the University of York and in local schools. He is Direct Access accredited and, in appropriate circumstances, is happy to accept instructions on this basis.

Further details are available in his CV, which can be downloaded.

Notable Cases

Op X. 2023-Ongoing. Instructed by CPS London/International SEOCID in large MoD procurement fraud investigation, to be tried at Southwark Crown.

R v. C & Ors. 2023 – Acted for a woman alleged to have arranged the brutal torture and murder of her ex-husband in his own home, background of Manchester organised crime and extensive intelligence.

Op Braid. 2023 – Instructed by Isle of Man A-G’s Chambers in alleged corporate fraud and perjury investigation involving multiple defendants and jurisdictions.

Op Benadir. 2021-3 – Instructed by CPS SEOCID to prosecute a double financing property fraud involving professional/solicitor defendants, £18m losses, related SRA investigations, 10-week trial at Liverpool Crown.

Op Manningtree. 2022-Ongoing. Defending in £123m fraud involving circumvention of Anti-Dumping Duty and Countervailing Duty imposed on Chinese solar modules imported into the UK and other EU member states.

X Ltd. 2022. Acting for corporate client carrying out water purification works, internal investigation into allegation of bribing Exxon Mobil employees in return for contracts. Advising on issues of corporate and individual culpability under the Bribery Act 2010, contractual liability and private prosecution.

X Ltd. 2022. Acting for corporate client operating food delivery services in multiple jurisdictions. Corporate subsidiaries and individual executives face allegations of fraudulent manipulation of riders’ status as independent contractors. Advised the UK parent company as to strategy in relation to an ongoing French criminal investigation and the risk of further criminal litigation in the UK and elsewhere.

R v. H and Ors. 2022 – Private instructions to defend Dubai-based UK national alleged to head an OCG organising the importation of 1 tonne of cocaine from Holland to the UK and an associated shooting. Also advised on extradition from Switzerland. One of the largest cases arising from the EncroChat probe.

R v. P and Ors Operation Bryson. 2021-3. Acting for former solicitor in National Trading Standards investigation into alleged fraudulent property trusts claiming to avoid care home fees being paid from property equity, 12-week trial at Leeds Crown.

R v. SVB. 2021-3. Acting for the A-G of Saint Helena, prosecuting the former orthopaedic surgeon on island for carrying out alleged non-consensual surgical and sexual assaults upon vulnerable patients. Involved consideration of over 700 patients, issues of consent in a criminal and civil context, interpretation of local ordinances, extradition.

SFO v X and Ors. 2021 – 4 year SFO investigation into alleged manipulation and falsification of testing and certification data in respect of steel produced for specialist industries, such as aerospace, oil & gas. Involves allegations of the deliberate falsification of quality certificates in the context of sensitive, international trade. Acting for a senior company technical officer, providing pre-charge strategic advice. Extensive written submissions in 2021 led to SFO discontinuing. Private funding.

R v. S, R v. L, R v. G&I. 2021-22 – Instructed to prosecute and defend in these three trials alleging the murder of babies, each involving alleged NAHI “shaken baby syndrome”, requiring highly specialist expertise, including bone pathology evidence from the USA.

R v. S. 2021 – 20-count indictment covering 17-year period, S faced multiple allegations of £5m + fraud, forgery, drugs conspiracies, money laundering and perverting the course of justice. He was alleged to be an international professional money launderer, operating in the UK, Spain, the US and the UAE. Expert evidence relating to international banking, trade, offshore corporate arrangements and accountancy. 10-week trial in 2021. Included EncroChat material.

R v. B and Ors – Op Larkshot. 2020-2. Instructed to represent a chartered accountant in the largest money laundering trial in English legal history. In one trial alone, £266m cash alleged to have been laundered through NatWest bank and Dubai gold trade. Acquitted after an 8-month trial at Leeds Crown. Included successful objection to admissibility of expert accountancy evidence. Now instructed to act for a former senior NatWest executive in related investigation.

SFO/DOJ/Greece v. X and Others. 2008-Ongoing – Multi-jurisdictional investigation into alleged corporate bribery of surgeons to use Johnson & Johnson medical devices. \$70m US and £5m UK settlements, US Deferred Prosecution Agreement. Nick was sole UK counsel for a former VP of Finance, alleged to have drafted an acquisition model concealing the bribes. Charges in the UK and US were not pursued after negotiation with SFO/DOJ/FBI/SEC. Criminal proceedings before Fraud Court in Athens are ongoing.

R v. B & F – 2018. Acting for a company director alleged to have been engaged in a £9m HMRC cheat. This case concerned false carousel trading in PPI leads, with complex international corporate structures and money flows Cut-throat defence in a trial lasting 5-6 weeks at Leeds Crown Court.

R v. Fellows & Boyle – This was one of the highest profile murder cases in 2018. Nick acted for the first defendant, who was alleged to be a professional assassin, using an Uzi sub-machine gun and a Webley revolver to shoot dead a Manchester and then a Liverpool gangland boss, in the context of multiple shootings and organised violence. One of the first cases to involve the use of EncroChat and similar encrypted technologies. 5-week trial in Liverpool Crown Court.

R v Skansen Interiors & Others – 2014-18 – This was the first ever jury trial in the UK of a company charged with a s.7 Bribery Act offence. Nick acted for the MD of Skansen Interiors, a London-based fit out and refurbishment contractor, facing allegations of paying bribes to secure refurbishment contracts worth £6m. Proceedings at Southwark Crown Court, addressing abuse of process issues and the “adequate procedures” defence.

Operation Nosedive – 2016-21 – Leading KC in this landfill tax fraud investigation, the largest ever of its type – £75m allegedly cheated from the public revenue over a 2 ½ year period. Investigation involves different UK regions, international money routes, sensitive material, pre-charge negotiations, related civil proceedings, related criminal investigations.

ABY Production Order – representing a senior diocese of the Church of England in an application for a Production Order relating to investigations into alleged sexual offending by senior clergy. Proceedings before the Recorder of London at the Old Bailey.

R v. X (a minor) – 7-year-old Katie Rough was killed by a 15-year-old girl, who suffocated her, then inflicted knife wounds in a York park. The case demanded extremely sensitive handling. Working closely with child forensic psychiatrists and psychologists, the defence team established diminished responsibility on the grounds of emerging schizotypal personality disorder. Leeds Crown Court 2017.

R v. H and Others. 2014-2020 – £12m said to have been obtained via a diversion fraud from UK public bodies including NHS Trusts. Nick acted for a Dubai based company director and represented him in Dubai and the UK, advising as to the criminal law in both jurisdictions and extradition. A large case running to 50,000 pages of material.

R v. Stubbs and Others. 2016-7 – Prosecution of joint enterprise murder, involving three defendants who targeted, chased down and then shot their victim in the back – included post-Jogee joint enterprise issues, diminished responsibility arising from effects of a prior head injury and admissibility concerning PAS material.

R v. Russell. 2016 – Acting for man serving life for the attempted murder and rape of an elderly woman in her 80s, then charged with a like offence. A “cold case” where a modern techniques analysed historical evidence, also involving a very challenging client with extreme psychopathy. Heard by the Recorder of London at the Old Bailey.

Russian Federation v. Moskvitin. 2013-4 – Part 2 Extradition Act proceedings regarding an alleged high profile murder of a police officer who had allegedly raped a child. Case involved human rights objections relating to prison conditions, evidence obtained through torture and unfair trial procedures. Required travel to Moscow and liaison with Russian lawyers and authorities.

Inquest re AM (a minor). 2011 – Acted for family in jury inquest concerning the death of a toddler at a nursery, choking incident, cross examination of pathologists, issues of standards of nursery care, ambulance practices and training.

R v. Kemp. 2010-11 – Successful defence of company director in largest ever investigation into pharmaceutical counterfeiting in the EU. MHRA’s largest prosecution to date, 5 month trial, required extensive knowledge of pharmaceutical regulations and industry, international aspects.

R v. Lee. 2010 – Leading Junior defending in “Ritz hotel fraud” – successful defence of alleged conspiracy to defraud by falsely representing that the Ritz hotel in London could be sold. Expert issues relating to the commercial property industry, international aspects.

R v. Anderson. 2007 – Conspiracy to murder (contract shooting), Nick was instructed after the initial conviction, launching a successful appeal against conviction, against original prosecution team.

R v. PFE & Others. Acted for company and chief executive in 6 week trial of gross negligent manslaughter arising from crushing accident in an industrial baling machine.

R v. Charlton. Prosecuted an 8-week murder – female killed partner during sexual role-play, complicated scientific, psychiatric and IT issues, defence of slow-burn provocation and traumatic amnesia.

Appellate Level Cases of Note:

R v. Mottram [2022] EWCA Crim 954 – Court of Appeal clarified the definition of a “murder involving sexual or sadistic conduct”.

R v. Zaboli & Ors [2010] EWCA Crim1273. – Successful appeal in conspiracy to blackmail.

R v. Fielding [2010] EWCA Crim 427. Successful appeal in conspiracy to defraud, Court of Appeal referring to the “attractive and persuasive argument”.

R (Green) v. Police Complaints Authority & Oths (House of Lords) [2004] 1 WLR 725, UKHL6. Black youth driven over during police chase and surveillance operation, subsequent claim of deliberate racist attack by an agent of the State, issues as to the impact of Arts 2 & 3 ECHR upon a victim’s rights of disclosure and effective involvement in subsequent investigations into police driver, who I acted for. Established important principles governing a victim’s rights in various proceedings.

R v. DM [2008] EWCA Crim 1544. Successful preparatory hearing interim appeal in an armed robbery case, concerning the scope of previous acquittal evidence as bad character and the application in this context of s.101(3) of the CJA 2003.

R v. Anderson [2006] EWCA Crim 1506. Leading junior in successful appeal against conviction in conspiracy to murder (contract killing), issue as to limits upon legitimate cross-examination of credibility, prosecution offered no evidence on main charge at re- trial.

A-Gs Refs (139, 140, 141) of 2006 [2007] EWCA Crim 463. Appropriate levels of sentencing for large-scale importation of cannabis.

R v. Anderson [2006]. EWCA Crim 1506 – Leading junior in successful appeal against conviction in conspiracy to murder (contract killing), issue as to limits upon legitimate cross-examination of credibility, prosecution offered no evidence on main charge at re- trial.

A-Gs Refs (139, 140, 141) of 2006 [2007]. EWCA Crim 463 – appropriate levels of sentencing for large-scale importation of cannabis.

R v. Hill [2004] EWCA Crim 1855 – successful appeal in conspiracy to defraud.

R (Wardle) v. Crown Court at Leeds – [2001] 2 WLR 865 (House of Lords) – elderly man attacked and killed during a burglary, prosecution changed charge from murder to manslaughter after unjustifiable delay, issues of custody time limits, abuse of process, statutory construction, Art 5 ECHR.

R (P(A) and Others) v. Leeds Youth Court [2001]. 5 Arch News 1 DC – ambit of abuse jurisdiction in magistrates’ court, advance disclosure.

R v. Carass Times 21.1.02 CA. Statutory construction of reverse burden of proof s.206 of the Insolvency Act in the light of the Human Rights Act.

Recommendations

Chambers & Partners UK Bar guide has ranked Nick Johnson KC at Band 1 for Financial Crime since 2012, currently one of just three Silks with such a ranking outside London. He is also ranked as a Leading Silk in the fields of Crime, and Crime (General and Fraud) and Business and Regulatory Crime in the Legal 500.

Nick Johnson KC has been shortlisted for ‘Silk of the year’ at The Legal 500 Bar Awards 2024

“He is an amazing advocate who has the jury hanging on his every word. A silk with a forensic brain.”

The Legal 500 2025 Business and Regulatory Crime

“He is the complete package. He speaks and acts with an unstated authority.”

The Legal 500 2025, Crime (General and fraud)

“Nicholas is a superstar: a superb advocate who meticulously prepares his cases, and has exceptional legal knowledge. He adapts beautifully to any circumstances and always finds the perfect tone.”

The Legal 500 2024 Business and Regulatory Crime

“A leader in this field. He is extremely knowledgeable, his judgement is sharp and he is a pleasure to instruct.”

The Legal 500 2024 Crime (General and Fraud)

“He is forensically brilliant and a great communicator. He’s very persuasive due to his deep knowledge and his skeleton arguments are on point.”

Chambers & Partners 2024 Financial Crime

“A master tactician with a wonderful court presence, he manages the team expertly – simply the real deal” “A silk with an enviable tactical brain”

The Legal 500 2023

“An exceptional advocate and a highly experienced fraud lawyer”
“His knowledge and his tactical awareness are second to none”

Chambers & Partners 2022 Financial Crime

“He has an amazingly calm persona, even when dealing with the most difficult of cases and clients. This unflappable demeanour also manifests itself into the courtroom and makes him a very jury friendly advocate”

The Legal 500 2022

“He is a phenomenal advocate, both in his written and oral presentation. I would wish him to represent me if I were in trouble – the best guarantee of a favourable outcome”

The Legal 500 2021

“His ability to cross examine is excellent” “A truly impressive silk with very strong attention to detail. He is assiduous in his preparation and he’s especially good in international fraud cases.”

Chambers and Partners 2020

“He is exceptionally good and his pedigree in fraud is second to none.” “He’s extremely thorough, has tremendous attention to detail and is extremely talented.”

Chambers and Partners 2019

“Recent work includes high-profile murder trials.”

The Legal 500 2018/19

“He is an exceptional advocate who controls a courtroom.”

Chambers and Partners 2018

“He has an excellent courtroom manner and affinity with clients.”

The Legal 500 2017

“Lots of people say they can do white-collar crime, but he is a real expert in it.” “He took silk recently, which was deserved definitely. He is very busy but always on top of everything.”

Chambers and Partners 2017

“A fantastic courtroom advocate.”

The Legal 500 2016

“He is tactically phenomenal; he’s fantastically focused on each and every case.” “His attention to detail is particularly impressive.”

Chambers and Partners 2014

Publications

- Contributing Author of “Lissack & Horlick on Bribery and Corruption” (Lexis Nexis 3rd ed. 2020).

Beyond the Bar

- Japanese Speaker
- Interested in Contemporary Photography, Walking, and Skiing
- Advocacy Lecturer at University of York Law Department