Email: clerks@churchcourtchambers.co.uk
Phone: 020 7936 3637

Maria Karaiskos KC

Year of call: 2000 | Year of silk: 2023
Head of Chambers

Ranked for Crime in the Chambers and Partners UK Guide 2027

About

Maria Karaiskos KC is a highly respected Silk renowned for her rigorous preparation, incisive analysis and ability to quickly identify the issues that matter. Her disciplined and strategic approach has been shaped by more than two decades of experience in serious and sensitive criminal cases. She brings a rare breadth of perspective to every case. In addition to her work as both prosecution and defence counsel, she sits as a Recorder and Deputy District Judge. This combination of advocacy and judicial experience gives her a unique insight into case strategy, evidential assessment and courtroom dynamics. Maria is trusted for her calm authority, persuasive advocacy and ability to bring clarity to complex legal and factual issues. She is widely recognised for her excellent judgement and for setting a really exceptional tone in court. Solicitors describe her as first class, noting her calm and measured approach even in the most challenging circumstances, while clients value her ability to provide clear, reassuring advice with sensitivity and professionalism. Her advocacy is frequently praised, with clients and professional colleagues highlighting the quality of her cross-examination, meticulous preparation and persuasive courtroom presence. She combines intellectual rigour with a practical, client-focused approach that inspires confidence at every stage of proceedings. Called to the Bar in 2000 and appointed Kings Counsel in 2023, Maria is the first female silk and the first home-grown silk at Church Court Chambers. Her practice encompasses the full spectrum of serious criminal work, including cases involving complex legal arguments, extensive disclosure, expert evidence and large volumes of material. She is regularly instructed in matters requiring detailed evidential analysis, careful strategic planning and confident advocacy. Areas of Expertise Marias practice includes: Homicide and attempted murder Serious sexual offences, including historic, multi-complainant and familial allegations Child cruelty and neglect Large-scale fraud and financial crime Drug conspiracies and organised criminal activity Fatal road traffic offences and complex driving cases Confiscation and proceeds of crime proceedings Multi-handed trials involving numerous defendants Cases involving psychiatric, medical, digital, forensic and financial expert evidence Appeals and cases raising complex issues of admissibility, disclosure and abuse of process Maria has extensive experience representing vulnerable clients and witnesses, including children, those affected by trauma and individuals with mental health or communication difficulties. Her thoughtful and reassuring manner enables clients to engage effectively with the legal process while maintaining confidence and dignity throughout proceedings. She also maintains a substantial private client practice, frequently advising professionals, and students facing allegations with potentially life-changing personal and reputational consequences. She is valued for her discretion, strategic judgement and ability to guide clients through highly sensitive matters with confidence and clarity. Regulatory Work Alongside her criminal practice, Maria undertakes a broad range of regulatory and quasi-criminal work, including environmental offences, health and safety prosecutions, local authority enforcement, trading standards matters and breaches of High Court injunctions. Her judicial experience as a Deputy District Judge further enhances this aspect of her practice. Sitting regularly in the Magistrates Court, she deals with financial seizure and forfeiture applications, housing matters, licensing issues, local authority enforcement and regulatory proceedings. This perspective provides valuable insight into how such cases are assessed and determined, enabling her to offer strategic and pragmatic advice to both prosecution and defence clients. Maria is particularly effective in cases involving complex statutory frameworks, technical expert evidence and significant reputational considerations. She is known for bringing structure, focus and clear strategic direction to challenging regulatory proceedings.

Central Court 25 Southampton Buildings London WC2A 1A

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Training and Education Maria regularly delivers lectures and training on complex legal issues to audiences ranging from specialist practitioner groups to large national and international conferences. She is also committed to legal education and community engagement, working with schools and youth organisations to improve understanding of the criminal justice system and encourage informed decision-making among young people. Direct Access Maria is accredited to accept instructions directly from members of the public through the Public Access scheme. Recent Cases R v DD Murder

Prosecuted a fatal stabbing at Strawberry Hill station. A complex case at the Old Bailey involving contested audio evidence, forensic reconstruction, multiple legal arguments and significant evidential rulings. R v KL Murder

Defended in a long-running and sensitive domestic murder case involving complex issues of medical causation, self-defence, joint enterprise allegations against three defendants and the impact of delayed medical treatment. R v YH Murder (Court of Appeal)

Defended a circumstantial stabbing case requiring detailed analysis of CCTV, forensic evidence and the defendants account of events within the building. Maria was granted leave to appear in the Court of Appeal, advancing arguments on the proper approach to leaving self-defence to a jury, drawing on established authorities and the evidential threshold required before alternative defences should be considered. R v HF Murder

Prosecuted a harrowing case involving a young son who killed his mother whilst under the influence of ketamine. The case involved extensive psychiatric evidence, toxicology and forensic science reports, together with the careful presentation of highly sensitive family background material. R v SD Sexual Offences

Defended in a multi-handed case involving historic allegations of sexual offending between children. The case required careful handling of sensitive evidence, consideration of a doli incapax defence, issues of evidential conflation and successful legal arguments under section 41 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999. R v PH Sexual Offences

Defended a bar manager accused of rape by multiple complainants who had worked under his supervision. The case involved complex issues of workplace dynamics, disclosure obligations and the careful testing of several interlinked accounts. R v Youth Sexual Offences

Defended a student at a prominent independent secondary school accused of raping another student. A highly sensitive and emotionally charged case requiring careful handling and cross-examination of vulnerable witnesses. R v RA Sexual Offences

Defended a well-known sportsperson facing historic allegations involving a child. The case required rigorous scrutiny of delayed complaints, extensive third-party material and the reconstruction of events alleged to have occurred many years earlier.

Practice Areas

- Criminal Law
- Health And Safety Law
- Direct Access
- Regulatory And Disciplinary Law

Languages

- English

Memberships and Appointments

Appointments

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Kings Counsel (2023)

Recorder, Crown Court (2018, North-East Circuit, London and South-East Circuit)

Deputy District Judge, Magistrates Court (2017, London and South-East Circuit)

CPS Rasso and Grade 4 prosecutor

External Advocacy Assessor to the CPS

FA Specialist Safeguarding Review Panel (2026)

FA Regional Disciplinary Panel (2025)

Accredited advocacy trainer for pupils and in-house advocates

Pupil Supervisor

Memberships and Scholarships

ARDL: Association of Regulatory and Disciplinary Lawyers

South-East Circuit

Criminal Bar Association

Herts and Beds Bar Mess

Middle Temple Scholar: Harold G. Fox and Harmsworth Awards

Languages

Greek

Cases of note

R v XX et al- defence

Murder: 7 youths charged with a double- stabbing in Luton

R v EW - prosecution

Murder: Fatal stabbing in nightclub in the Midlands

R v DF - defence

One-punch manslaughter

R v Youth - defence

Murder: Stabbing by youth outside school in Luton

R v DD, MA & Youth prosecution

Murder: Multi-handed stabbing in London

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R v SS, CP & KL - defence

Murder: 3 defendants, joint enterprise attack on disabled man in Ware, Hertfordshire, complex issues of causation and medical negligence

R v AH - defence

Murder: Fatal piercing of eye at Finsbury Park caf

R v CS - prosecuting

Murder: Double shooting break-in, killing wife and mother-in-law, attempted shooting of police in Hastings

R v DC - prosecuting

Murder: Stabbing by wife on husband

R v MH et al - defence

Murder: Multi-handed stabbing on bus at Stratford

R v MM et al - prosecuting

One-punch multi-handed manslaughter at Kingsbury station

R v CA et al- defence

Perverting the course of justice in an appeal against conviction for murder

R v LC- defence

Death by dangerous driving

R v MW prosecution, private case

Notification Requirements for UK nationals convicted of relevant sexual offences abroad

R v MT defence, private case

Sexual Assault in University Halls of Residence

R v BW defence, private case

Rapes following a date on Hinge dating site

R v AS - prosecution

Rapes on 4-year-old and her mother, infecting both with gonorrhoea

R v AL prosecution

Rapes: domestic context on child

R v JH prosecution

Rapes: domestic context

R v AG - defence

Historic rapes by a then 14-year-old boy

R v AP defence, private case

Historic rapes in family setting

R v JP defence, private case

Historic rapes over sustained period of time of 48-year-old

R v DW - defence

Historic rape of 8-year-old boy

R v ME - defence

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Sexual abuse in care home by carer

R v AC - defence

Rapes at University Halls of Residence

R v KM - defence, private case

Sexual abuse by bogus gynaecologist on multiple women

R v NA et al - defence

Cryptocurrency, large-scale, multi-handed drug importation

R v MW et al- defence

Fraud: Internal multi-million-pound fraudulent loan scheme at Natwest

R v KH et al defence

Large-scale drugs supply, multi-handed

R v SS - defence

Fraud: Internal abuse of position of trust at Barclays

R v EH - defence

Multi-handed money laundering of pensioner

R v DP et al - defence

Fraud: Multi-million-pound fraud of jade and ivory auctioned at Bonhams

R v MS defence

International multi-million money laundering

R v MK defence, private case

Housing fraud, unlawful sub-letting

R v M Ltd - defence, private case

Personal injury on construction site

R v RW defence, private case

Grenfell Enquiry, advisory

R v SM defence, private case

Health and safety breaches on construction site

R v A Ltd defence, private case

Divisional Court: Environmental law breaches/Enforcement Undertaking EU Forms: water discharge, recycling packaging

R v YH defence, Court of Appeal

Murder appeal against conviction dealing with applicability of self-defence direction

R v BW defence, private case in the Court of Appeal

Sexual Assault appeal against sentence on elements of community order

R v CS prosecution, Court of Appeal

Drugs supply appeal against conviction based on Judge giving evidence in summing up

R v JM prosecution, Court of Appeal

Historic sexual offences: abuse of process in a terminatory ruling based on delay and loss of material

R v DB defence, Court of Appeal

Sexual offences: whether victim was particularly vulnerable for the purposes of aggravating the sentencing

R v PB prosecution, Court of Appeal

Indecent images: whether mens rea for making is strict liability; decisions to prosecute for CPS only not Court

Quotes

"Maria is an outstanding barrister and a true leader in her field. Her style of advocacy is calm, measured and impeccably poised. She makes her points with precision and clarity, which results in advocacy that is deeply compelling and very persuasive."
Chambers & Partners UK Guide 2027

"Maria is excellent and has hit the ground running as a new silk. Her judgement is excellent and the tone she sets in court is really just exceptional. Her cross-examination is also excellent. She is measured and reasonable, with a clear and strategic approach to cases."
Legal 500 UK Guide 2025

"Maria is first-class, consistently conducting herself with a calm and measured approach, even in the most challenging circumstances. Her interactions with clients are exemplary. She provides clear, reassuring advice with both sensitivity and professionalism, inspiring confidence at every turn. Maria is a true pleasure to work with and I cannot recommend her highly enough."
Partner in Legal 500 ranked solicitors firm