

Richard Vardon

Year of Call: 1985



Richard Vardon has practised in criminal law for over 30 years. He has amassed considerable experience and expertise defending cases of a significant nature in the Crown Court and Court of Appeal and occasionally appearing before professional disciplinary tribunals.

Richard is regularly instructed in cases of terrorism, homicide, fatal road traffic accidents, fraud (including VAT carousel fraud), serious sexual offences (including historic allegations) and large scale drug importation/supply cases linked to organised crime.

The focus of Richard's practice is defence. He regularly receives instructions in high-profile matters of the highest severity and complexity. Recent cases have seen him leading the defence in a 6-week terrorist trial at the Old Bailey and defending in one of the largest Class A drugs importation cases prosecuted in the UK, involving drugs concealed in ambulances.

In 2024, Richard (led by [Siobhan Grey KC](#)) was successful in the Privy Council in overturning a murder conviction from 2004. The prosecution will not be seeking a retrial, and the appellant has been released from prison after serving 20 years of a life sentence.

Richard is lauded in the Legal Directories as being "a game-changing advocate" dealing with "heavyweight cases" and it is stated that "Juries love his charm and humour, and judges immediately recognise his ability to deal with difficult situations with eloquence and realism."

[VIEW PRIVACY POLICY](#)

Education

University: Birmingham University
School of Law: Council of Legal Education
Qualifications: LL.B

Notable Cases

R v MAYNARD [2024 - Privy Council]

(Led by [Siobhan Grey KC](#)) was successful in the Privy Council in overturning a murder conviction from 2004.

The prosecution will not be seeking a retrial, and the appellant has been released from prison after serving 20 years of a life sentence. They worked together with [Talibah Byron](#), Attorney of Byron Law in St Kitts, [The Death Penalty Project](#) and Saul Lehrfreund MBE & Killian Moran [Simons Muirhead Burton LLP](#). Details of the case can be found on [The Privy Council](#).

R v MARCIN MAJERKIEWICZ [2025 - Manchester Crown Court]

Defence counsel in this well publicised case which involved the killing by the defendant using a hammer of

his 67-year-old housemate, his subsequent dismemberment and attempts to dispose of the body parts in parks in north Manchester and Salford. Thereafter the defendant went to elaborate lengths to conceal the death and clean up the scene of the murder and dismemberment. The killing was financially motivated, and it was, to some extent fluke that he was caught before fleeing the country. The investigation generated an enormous amount of material. The life sentence with a minimum term of 32 years reflected the psychopathic nature of the murder.

R v CHRISTOPHER BARLOW [2025 - Manchester Crown Court]

Defence counsel in the notorious “body in the shed” murder which started out as a missing person enquiry and led to the discovery of the deceased’s naked body in a locked shed in the back yard of the defendant’s home address.

R v ANDREW ROBSON [2025 - Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court]

Defence counsel in a “road rage” murder in which, following an argument between two motorists on a busy road in Oldham, both got out of their vehicles and a fight ensued. The defendant got back into his vehicle and it was alleged deliberately drove at the deceased causing severe head injuries from which he died. The defendant’s case was very different. He asserted he was the victim and had been trying to get away from a violent attack by the deceased when he drove accidentally into collision with him.

R v JOSEPH PARKINSON [2026 - Preston Crown Court]

Defence counsel in a case of sexual abuse of a very young child by a part-time police officer who vehemently denied the offences. The case involved a great deal of legal argument relating to res gestate and hearsay. Controversially the prosecution called the very young child – 3 years of age – whose evidence required an intermediary to ask agreed questions. The case was withdrawn from the jury at the end of the prosecution case after legal submissions as to the inadequacy of the evidence.

R v SANDRA DIXON [2025 - Reading Crown Court]

Defence counsel in a highly unusual case of historic child abuse of 3 children by their mother, a 60-year-old woman of good character from whom they were estranged, over a period of many years.

R v LIAM FOSBROOK [2024 - Minshull Street Crown Court]

This was a tragic and unusual case of murder which involved a relatively young man of good character who stabbed to death his sister’s violent ex – boyfriend when he attended at her home, despite being prohibited from doing so. The Defendant was charged and acquitted of murder but convicted of manslaughter at his re – trial.

R v EDEH AND 9 OTHERS [2024 - Manchester Crown Court]

The defendant was one of ten defendants tried for the murder of Kenny Carter who was stabbed to death on the streets of Stretford, Manchester in consequence of some gang dispute. Edeh was only 12 years of age at the date of the killing and 15 years of age at the date of trial. He was acquitted of being involved in the joint enterprise alleged to kill or do any harm to the deceased.

R v PAUL GREEN AND OTHERS [2022 - Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court]

Defence counsel for the main D in the largest importation of class A drugs into the U.K. The Prosecution alleged some £7 billion worth of drugs were involved in the various conspiracies alleged. The case was extraordinarily complex and challenging not least because of the volume of used and unused material. The case lasted for some two years and, for significant parts I was without leading counsel, who had to attend to other professional commitments. The legal issues were varied and difficult of which encrochat was just one part.

R v RAHUL SHARMA [2023 - Wolverhampton Crown Court]

The defendant was a troubled man in his early 30's who lived at home with his parents. He had no previous convictions but was a paranoid schizophrenic. He was tried for the rape and murder of a prostitute who was working in the red light area of Wolverhampton in the early hours of 16/6/22. She sustained a traumatic brain injury from which she died having been kicked and punched repeatedly. The last moments of her life and the attack were caught on an audio recording.

R V XAVIOUR WYNTER [2023 - Manchester Crown Court]

The deceased, Rhamero West was stabbed to death in a garden of a house in the Old Trafford area having been chased through the streets both in vehicles and on foot. The legal issues revolved around joint enterprise. The case had a rather complicated factual matrix which involved cell site, eyewitness accounts and cctv evidence. In addition, there was misconceived applications to adduce bad character evidence. The defendant was advised not to give evidence at a very early stage. He was the only one acquitted.

R V KAYLAN CRANKSHAW. MICHAEL LIBURD, KELLAN GUMMERY [2021 - Manchester Crown Court]

On the evening of 21/4/21 the deceased, a teenager was walking along a residential street in Salford with his 15-year-old friend. Suddenly, a vehicle bearing cloned plates drove onto the road and its occupants got out, armed with knives and attacked the deceased. As he tried to escape, he was knocked over by a second vehicle, bearing cloned plates, out of which Crankshaw emerged with a motorcycle chain. All three continued to attack the deceased, leaving him dying as they fled the scene. There were several factual matters to consider in respect of cctv and cell site evidence. In addition, the defendant had mental health issues with a significant criminal past.

R V JAMIE KENNEDY [2021 - Manchester Crown Court]

The case involved a rather one-sided fight between the defendant and a much older and slightly infirm, deceased. The defendant, prior to the instruction of leading counsel, pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was acquitted of murder. This early acceptance of responsibility was vital in the context of the allegation of murder and was vindicated by the acquittal.

R V MARK AND DARREN CORBETT [2022 - Leicester Crown Court]

This was a major drugs operation extending nationwide but mainly concentrated in the North West and Midlands. It involved a variety of evidence including cctv, cell site, ANPR together with encrochat material, which was subject to challenge. Mark Corbett was the principal defendant and Darren, his brother worked at his direction.

R v FLOYD (GIBSON, KASRATI, DESILVA, OWEN, CLARKE) [January 2020 - Birmingham Crown Court]

One of the largest Class A drugs importation cases prosecuted in the UK involving drugs concealed in

ambulances. Counsel acted in the contested POCA proceedings in which the prosecution originally contended for a benefit figure of £2.6 million which they varied to £1.9 million. They sought to recover such amount in part from the sale of a house. The case raised difficult legal issues relating to “assumptions”, tainted gifts, equitable interests in property but most importantly how the benefit figure should be assessed in a case of this nature. The judge ruled that the benefit figure was £4,500 and confiscation was ordered in such amount.

R v ANTHONY MERCHANT [December 2019] Preston Crown Court

Defence counsel in an attempted murder trial at Preston Crown Court in which the Prosecution alleged that the Defendant was one of two masked men who had broken into the victim`s flat and stabbed him repeatedly causing very serious life threatening injuries. The Defendant claimed the victim had deliberately mis-identified him as a result of past hostility and that the real culprits were involved with the victim in drug dealing. The case raised difficult disclosure issues relating to material held by the Prosecution which proved to be of huge evidential significance when correlated with key events in the evidence.

R v LEE TIERNEY (& 15 OTHERS) : OPERATION BLUSH [December 2019] Liverpool Crown Court

Defence counsel for an alleged principal offender involved in multi - handed conspiracies to possess firearms with intent to endanger life and supply drugs .Those conspiracies took place against the backdrop of a number of serious incidents of violence in which firearms including an Uzi sub-machine gun and a Beretta were used to devastating effect as part of an ongoing gang dispute. The extensive high profile investigation generated a voluminous amount of material which included disputed forensic and cell site evidence - {Liverpool Echo}

R v ZAMAN ALI (& OTHERS) [June 2019] Manchester Crown Court

Representing one of four defendants in a case involved two arson attacks at night in which the front windows of each property was broken and petrol used to set the fire alight. The first attack, at the home of a lady and her two young children caused substantial damage. The second was at the home of an elderly couple in which the female occupant sustained life threatening burn injuries and was left with extensive scarring following numerous operations. An extensive police investigation using CCTV, ANPR and mobile phone evidence including cell-siting identified those involved in the attacks.

R v V [March 2019] Court of Appeal

Defendant was a 16 year old who pleaded guilty to two offences of robbery as part of a joint enterprise to rob involving three others. One of the victims sustained life threatening injuries from a co - accused who used a knife, about which the others were ignorant. Leave to Appeal was initially refused. The Lord Chief Justice gave leave to appeal and reserved the case to himself, eventually reducing the sentences imposed by 30%.

R v FLOYD (GIBSON, KASRATI, DESILVA, OWEN, CLARKE) [November 2018] Court of Appeal

One of the largest Class A drugs importation cases prosecuted in the UK involving drugs concealed in ambulances. Leave to appeal the sentence was refused by the single judge. Counsel, acting pro bono renewed his application before the full Court of Appeal [November 2018] who reduced the sentenced originally imposed.

R v DAVID PAWLUK [October 2018] Minshull Street Crown Court

Leading counsel for the defence in the murder by a husband of his wife. Difficult legal issues relating to a loss of control defence, in circumstances where the defendant had limited recollection of the event. – {Daily Mail}

R v JACK COSTELLO [August 2018] Preston Crown Court

Defence counsel in high profile well publicised murder trial involving a violent incident in a Darwen nightclub in which a 23 year old man died from a neck wound caused by the impact from a glass.

R v BENJAMIN HEAVYSIDE [August 2018] Court of Appeal

Defence appeal involving the interpretation and application of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 provisions as to the “three strikes” mandatory minimum sentencing provisions.

R v MATTHEW HANKINSON & OTHERS [July 2018] Central Criminal Court, London

Lead counsel for the defence in a terrorist trial in which it was alleged the Defendant was a leading member of a proscribed organisation which was behind a plot to kill a serving MP & police officer.

R v BARBARA COOMBES [July 2018] Liverpool Crown Court

Defending a 63 year old woman who killed her father and buried his body in her garden. She went on to dishonestly claim £190,000 in carers allowance together with her late father’s pension. The Prosecution were eventually persuaded to accept a guilty plea to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility based on post-traumatic stress disorder & severe depressive illness developed as a consequence of significant abuse over a long period of time. She was sentenced to 9 years imprisonment. Mr Justice King indicated that had she been convicted of murder he would have imposed life with a 20 years determinate element.

R v SCOTT ATKINSON [June 2018] Court of Appeal

Defence appeal involving the interpretation and application of the “dangerousness” sentencing provisions.

R v CORDELL AUSTIN & OTHERS [August 2017] Manchester Crown Court

Representing one of 13 Defendants tried for the murder of Abdulwahab Hafidah in Moss Side, Manchester. The Prosecution alleged the Defendant was a ringleader in the joint enterprise to kill or do really serious injury to the deceased who they claimed was a member of the “Rusholme Crips” gang and had strayed onto another gang’s (“Active Only”) territory before being chased through the streets and attacked with knives and hammers. Legal issues relating to joint enterprise in the light of R v Jogee and admissibility of evidence relating to gang membership.

R v FLOYD (GIBSON, KASRATI, DESILVA, OWEN, CLARKE) [July 2016] Birmingham Crown Court – {BBC News} {Sky News} {Daily Telegraph}

One of the largest Class A drugs importation cases prosecuted in the UK involving drugs concealed in ambulances. Sentencing to a total of 94 years at Birmingham Crown Court, Judge Francis Laird said: “This was a highly sophisticated, meticulously planned and well-executed conspiracy involving the importation of Class A drugs on a truly colossal scale.”

R v McBLAIN [2012] EWCA Crim 1416 - CA (Crim Div) (Davis LJ, Treacy J, Judge Peter Collier QC (Recorder of Leeds) - {The Telegraph Online}

- Successful reduction in the sentence of a heroin addict awarded compensation for being denied methadone in prison, who had used the award to purchase drugs upon his release.

