

Donal Lawler

Called: 2008

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Donal Lawler is a highly respected specialist in general crime, fraud & financial crime and trading standards.

Ranked as a leading junior in crime by the legal directories, Donal has a broad practice encompassing both prosecution and defence work, where he is instructed as a leading and led junior, in a variety of serious criminal cases.

His expertise spans a wide range of criminal offenses, including murder, drug conspiracies, serious organised crime, sexual assault, firearms offenses, and serious violence. Donal is also well-versed in complex fraud cases, bribery and corruption, money laundering, and asset recovery under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

Donal is known for his meticulous attention to detail, thorough preparation, and tenacity in every case he handles. He is particularly skilled in working with vulnerable clients, ensuring they receive the highest level of care and legal protection throughout the judicial process.

Before coming to the Bar, Donal had a successful career in Business and IT Consulting, a background that gives him a unique perspective and sharp problem-solving skills that he applies to his legal work.

Specialist Areas

Criminal Defence	Criminal Prosecution
Fraud & Financial Crime	Private Prosecution
Asset Forfeiture and Confiscation	Professional Discipline
Inquests & Inquiries	Regulatory Law
Public Law	

Testimonials

> "An exceptionally effective and assured advocate, particularly well suited to serious and complex criminal work. He brings a calm authority to demanding cases and combines detailed mastery of the evidence with sound, well-judged tactical decision-making."

Chambers & Partners 2027

"He is ferociously hard working and has excellent judgement. He really cares about winning for his clients."

Chambers & Partners 2027

“Donal is unflappable and calm under pressure. His cross-examination is quietly lethal: measured, patient, and precisely calibrated to the witness, be that a seasoned officer, an expert witness, or a complainant who must be challenged with real care. His preparation is meticulous; he knows the unused as well as the served evidence and is invariably several steps ahead of the prosecution. A tireless worker, Donal is entirely without ego and possesses a rare gift for handling the most difficult lay clients and persuading them to accept robust, realistic advice. His closing speeches are always beautifully structured, persuasive, and pitched perfectly. He really is an exceptional barrister who cuts through the chaff very early on, identifying the key points on which the case will actually turn. He truly is a delight to work with and gets results.”

Legal 500 2027

‘Donal is an excellent junior. He is meticulous in his preparation of the most complex of cases.’

Legal 500 2026

‘Donal is a tenacious and committed advocate.’

Legal 500 2026

"Donal is calm, attentive, reassuring and methodical. He is exceptional with clients, incredibly responsive and engaging. He is also thoughtful, providing considered responses."

Chambers and Partners 2026

> "He is just very sensible and gets the job done quickly and efficiently. He always has the best interest of the clients and is very personable."
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> **Chambers and Partners 2026**

> "Donal is always quick to respond, provides sound advice and thinks quickly on his feet. He manages clients well and is able to appreciate wider commercial outlook."
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> **Legal 500 2025**

> Donal Lawler is an experienced crime junior, capable of handling a broad range of offences from homicides to sexual assaults. He predominantly acts for defendants both as sole counsel and with a leader. He has additional expertise defending against charges of fraudulent activity.
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> **Chambers and Partners 2026**

Ranked In





Cases

Criminal Defence

R v R and others – Forced compulsory Labour. Described as one of the longest and most complex cases of its kind. Acted for the first defendant

R v G and others – Conspiracy to import firearms Instructed alone for the first Defendant, accused of importing and converting firearms to the West Midlands. Much of the defence relied on detailed analysis of cell-site evidence.

R v W – Murder – Defendant accused of murder having defended himself against a murderous assault. Case involved complex legal arguments and expert evidence relating to loss of control.

R v WT Death by dangerous driving – Represented a youth accused of causing the death of two people through his driving. Defendant was young with significant learning difficulties.

R v VD and others – Case involved the importation of over 100kg of cocaine into the United Kingdom and Netherlands, valued at £16 million and hidden in the rudder-stock area of tankers crossing from Colombia

R v O – Defendant accused of a series of gunpoint robberies

Criminal Prosecution

Fraud & Financial Crime

R v M and others – Multi-handed conspiracy to defraud

R v C – Defendant accused of defrauding a number of elderly and vulnerable complainants.

Trading Standards

Donal has been instructed to represent numerous defendants accused of overcharging for work, carrying out unnecessary work or substandard work. All cases involve substantial cross-examination of expert witnesses.

Professional Memberships

- Criminal Bar Association
- South Eastern Circuit

Awards, Qualifications & Other

- Contributing Editor, Criminal Law Weekly
- Chapter Editor, Archbold’s Criminal Practice
- Former Secretary of the Criminal Bar Association

Direct Access

Donal Lawler is qualified to accept instructions directly from clients and is registered under the Bar Council’s Public Access Scheme, meaning that members of the public who seek specialist advice can come directly to him. In addition, he welcomes instructions from solicitors, in-house law departments, qualified foreign lawyers, and clients licensed by the Bar Council to give instructions directly to barristers under the Bar Council’s Licensed Access Scheme. For more information please visit our Direct Access page here.