

# Sarah Wood

YEAR OF CALL: 1996



*"She is a superb lawyer and sees points of admissibility that others do not.  
The best of her generation in terms of effort and ability."*

THE LEGAL 500 2021

*"Nothing ever seems to faze Sarah and she is always at the end of a  
phone should I need to speak with her. Sarah has an excellent manner  
with clients and always works tirelessly to achieve the best possible  
outcome."*

THE LEGAL 500 2022.

*"Without a shadow of a doubt one of the best barristers I have ever  
worked with. Sarah is incredibly hard-working, knowledgeable and always*

*goes the extra mile to assist both me and my client's."*

THE LEGAL 500 2022.

*Sarah is unflappable with clients and on her feet, and a calm and assured presence in the midst of contentious litigation.'*

The Legal 500 2024 | Tier 1

*"Calm under pressure from judges and effective and focused in her submissions."*

Chambers & Partners, 2024

## Overview

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Sarah Wood is an experienced and highly accomplished barrister who specialises in Proceeds of Crime & Asset Forfeiture, Business Crime, Private Prosecutions, and Financial Remedies cases in the Family Court involving high-value assets and complex financial arrangements.

Sarah is Joint Head of the Business Crime Team at 5SAH. She is ranked in The Legal 500 (Tier 1) and Chambers & Partners (Tier 2) for her Confiscation & Asset Recovery work. Sarah is also recognised in Chambers & Partners for Financial Crime - Private Prosecutions, in the exclusive spotlight table.

She is known as the 'go-to' Barrister for cases involving both POCA and matrimonial finance. She is one of a handful of barristers with experience of dealing with cases where there are contemporaneous family financial proceedings and criminal POCA claims.

Sarah was the Winner of [The Legal 500 UK Bar Awards 2023](#) for Financial Crime junior of the year.

Sarah regularly writes and speaks on all areas of her work.

*"She is a calm and meticulous advocate in cross examination."*

Chambers & Partners 2024.

*"Her written submissions are clear, concise and persuasive. She has a calm and authoritative manner in Court and with clients. She is a powerhouse of POCA knowledge."*

The Legal 500 2023.

*"She is fantastic and very clever. She has a really soft approach and is like a silent assassin."*

Chambers & Partners 2022 - Financial Crime - Private Prosecution.

*"She is a superb lawyer and sees points of admissibility that others do not. The best of her generation in terms of effort and ability. As an advocate she is direct, calm and makes the point really effectively."*

Chambers and Partners 2021.

*"Modest, hard-working and clever, she's got a brilliant practice. She does very complex confiscation and asset seizure work for both prosecution and defence, and is brilliant to lead."*

Chambers & Partners, 2024

## *Direct Public Access*

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Sarah accepts Direct Public Access instructions and is qualified to undertake litigation.

*“Sarah is a quality advocate who is meticulous in her craft.”*

Chambers & Partners 2024.

*“As an advocate she is direct, calm and makes the point really effectively.”*

The Legal 500 2021.

*“She has a forensic eye for detail.”*

The Legal 500 2020 - POCA & Asset Forfeiture.

*“She has a fantastic manner in court, and is a blend of everything you’d want in a practitioner in this area.”*

Chambers & Partners 2022 - Financial Crime

*“A really good strategic thinker who is really aware of the important principles in a case and highly knowledgeable on the crossover between POCA and family law.”*

Chambers & Partners 2022 - Private Prosecutions & POCA.

*“A really good strategic thinker who is really aware of the important principles in a case and highly knowledgeable on the crossover between POCA and family law.”*

Chambers & Partners 2022 - Financial Crime - Private Prosecutions & POCA.

*“An incredibly gifted, very intelligent person who is very capable in financial crime and POCA work.”*

Chambers and Partners 2020.

*“A very thoughtful and very persuasive advocate who drafts beautifully, she's very much a go-to for third-party POCA clients.”*

Chambers & Partners, 2024

## *Professional Memberships*

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Criminal Bar Association.

Fraud Lawyers Association.

Proceeds of Crime Lawyers Association.

Family Law Bar Association.

Founding Committee member of the Cybercrime Practitioners Association.

## *Asset Recovery, Civil Fraud & Confiscation*

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### **POCA & Family Financial Proceedings**

Sarah is one of a handful of barristers with experience of dealing with cases where there are contemporaneous family financial proceedings and criminal POCA claims. She has the knowledge and understanding to be able to advise and represent clients in both sets of proceedings, including as an interested party pursuant to POCA s10A. This ensures consistency and an all-encompassing overview of the case. Sarah is also able to offer strategic input with a view to securing a favourable settlement at an early stage to avoid the need for litigation.

Sarah frequently appears in both the High Court and the Family Court in this area of work and is often instructed to act on behalf of the CPS as the intervener in the family proceedings. She is also currently instructed by several high-profile clients in financial remedy proceedings about the implications of a potential confiscation order against the other party to those proceedings. She regularly writes and presents seminars on the interplay between the two sets of proceedings.

### **Restraint & Confiscation**

Sarah has a detailed knowledge of restraint, confiscation and enforcement proceedings with experience in this area in the Appellate Courts, the High Court and the Crown Court and is able to offer strategic tactical advice from an early stage in the proceedings. She is frequently instructed in complex POCA s22 applications, enforcement receiver applications and has

extensive experience of POCA orders in relation to cryptocurrencies.

Sarah is currently instructed by both Applicants and Respondents in several Account Freezing and Forfeiture applications. She has obtained high-profile multi-million-pound forfeiture orders on behalf of the NCA.

Sarah has experience of the disclosure issues that arise when there are related criminal and civil fraud proceedings running contemporaneously. She has lectured on injunctive relief in civil proceedings.

*“Recommended for confiscation orders in relation to fraud and matrimonial work”*

*The Legal 500 2020.*

*“A very thorough barrister with a calm demeanour, who provides well-informed advice and never gets flustered.”*

*Chambers and Partners 2023.*

*“In line with her expertise in family financial disputes, she displays particular knowledge when it comes to contemporaneous confiscation and family ancillary relief proceedings.”*

*Chambers and Partners 2020.*

## *Family, Children & International Family*

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### **Financial Remedies**

A significant part of Sarah's specialist practice is in Financial Remedies in the Family Courts. Sarah advises clients on all aspects of these proceedings and has a proven knowledge of complex trust arrangements, set aside applications, section 37 applications and the impact of bankruptcy in relation to one of the parties to the proceedings. She is known for her approachable manner and attention to detail.

### **POCA & Family Financial Proceedings**

Sarah has extensive experience of dealing with cases where there are contemporaneous family financial proceedings and criminal POCA claims and is an established and well-recognised specialist in this niche area.

### **TOLATA**

Sarah is also able to advise and represent clients in complex TOLATA claims.

## ***Business Crime & Financial Regulation***

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### **Complex Fraud & Financial Crime**

Sarah has specialised in complex fraud and financial crime since 2000. She is widely recognised and highly regarded for her work in this area having prosecuted and defended in several important cases brought by the SFO, the FCA and the CPS Specialist Fraud Division. As both leading counsel and led junior, Sarah is known for her diligence and meticulous preparation of these cases. She is adept at handling cases involving a large volume of paperwork and is quickly able to identify the critical issues for both a jury and a client. Sarah's knowledge and experience includes cases involving Ponzi frauds, fraud on the revenue, money laundering, fraudulent trading and fraud within both the construction and education industries.

### **Financial Regulation**

Sarah has represented disqualified directors and also has particular experience of successfully defending clients in prosecutions for specific and technical offences brought under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and Companies Act 2006.

## Complex Disclosure

Sarah is regularly instructed to advise on complex disclosure issues, having advised the SFO, the Metropolitan and City of London Police Forces, the Attorneys General of Jersey and the Isle of Man and the OFT on disclosure problems and legal professional privilege.

Sarah speaks and writes regularly on her areas of expertise and is the author of the chapter? *'Fraudulent Trading and other frauds on creditors' in Butterworths "Fraud: Law, Practice and Procedure"*.

*"She's a delight to work with and a determined counsel who is at ease in long and complicated cases."*

Chambers and Partners 2020.

## Criminal Defence

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In her criminal work, she is a well-respected jury advocate known for her experience of prosecuting and defending lengthy, complex, high-value fraud and money laundering cases. Sarah has a loyal following of leading solicitors and is regularly instructed to defend in cases brought by the SFO, the FCA and the CPS? Specialist Fraud Division. She is renowned for her ability to master substantial and multifaceted issues.

Sarah is frequently instructed on behalf of Defendants in all areas of serious crime, particularly those with a financial or regulatory element.

Sarah also has particular experience of dealing with motoring matters and regularly receives direct access instructions in this field.? In recent cases she has successfully defended corporate clients charged with offences contrary to Section 172 of the Road Traffic Act and individuals charged with allowing a vehicle to be used with no insurance. She regularly represents clients who are at risk of losing their licences under the totting up procedure.



# Criminal Prosecutions - Private & Public

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## Private Prosecution

Sarah has been instructed in private prosecution matters for several years, having begun prosecuting cases brought on behalf of the RSPCA. She now regularly undertakes private prosecution work (both prosecuting and defending) and is able to advise about all aspects of this area. She has related experience in the Divisional Court and before costs judges specifically in connection with private prosecution cases.

Sarah is on the exclusive Spotlight table of leading barristers recognised by Chambers & Partners conducting Financial Crime: Private Prosecution work.

*“She can digest boxes of information and has a photographic memory!”*

*“Sarah will go out of her way to achieve life-changing results for her clients.”*

Chambers and Partners 2023 - Financial Crime - Private Prosecutions.

## Cases of Note

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### CHILD & FAMILY CASES

#### **Gohil v Gohil (with CPS intervening) [2023] EWFC 1567**

Instructed on behalf of Varsha Gohil

#### **G v G (Confiscation Order: Conduct) [2023] EWFC**

Financial Remedy case between Mrs G and Mr G with CPS intervening. Case heard over 3 days. Sarah Wood instructed by applicant.

#### **A v A (with the CPS intervening)**

Sarah was instructed on behalf of the CPS to intervene in family proceedings ahead of

confiscation proceedings in order to ensure that the matrimonial assets were distributed in accordance with MCA 1973 section 25 principles rather than as a means of avoiding a confiscation order.

### **P v P (with the CPS intervening)**

Sarah was instructed on behalf of the CPS to intervene in family proceedings where one party was seeking to vary a periodical payments order pending the confiscation proceedings against the other party.

### **Athwal v Athwal**

Sarah was instructed via the Bar Pro Bono unit to represent Mrs Athwal in her financial remedies proceedings. There was an overlap with previous criminal proceedings as Mrs Athwal's mother-in-law (Bachan Kaur Athwal) and brother-in-law had been convicted in a high profile trial of the honour killing of her sister-in-law, Surjit Athwal. Bachan Kaur Athwal was an intervener in the family proceedings. Following a lengthy final hearing, Sarah successfully obtained a 100% award of the equity in the FMH for Mrs Athwal by relying upon conduct and general equitable principles.

### **M v M (with the CPS intervening)**

Sarah was involved in prosecuting one of the parties to these proceedings in a significant high value money laundering case. She was then instructed to appear on behalf of the CPS in the complex family proceedings in the High Court in order to ensure the preservation of assets that were the subject of a restraint and subsequent confiscation order.

### **K v K (with the CPS intervening)**

Sarah was instructed on behalf of the husband in this case who was the subject of a confiscation order the CPS were seeking to enforce by way of a receivership order. A three day hearing took place in the family proceedings in order to establish the wife's knowledge of the husband's criminality at the time.

## **ASSET RECOVERY, CIVIL FRAUD AND CONFISCATION**

### **R v Cracknell [2020] EWCA Crim 132**

Complex and contested POCA section 22 application in relation to the Defendant's beneficial interest in a former matrimonial home. Involved detailed submissions in relation to tainted gifts, trusts and the interplay between POCA and family financial proceedings.

### **R v Bashir**

POCA section 22 application involving submissions in respect of the fairness of increasing the available amount in circumstances where the Court had previously already done so.

### **R v Choudhury**

Instructed to represent Mr Choudhury both at trial for offences of mortgage fraud and then subsequently in the lengthy and complicated confiscation proceedings. The confiscation proceedings involved questions about the realisation of shares in a major public company in Bangladesh, the role of the trustee in bankruptcy and whether Mr Choudhury's wife ought to be a party pursuant to POCA section 10A.

### **R v Hayes (2016)**

Instructed to represent the wife of convicted Libor trader Tom Hayes in respect of a POCA 2002 section 10A application (subsequently considered on appeal (2018) EWCA Crim 682)

## **BUSINESS CRIME**

### **R v Ablitt & Others**

Led junior instructed to represent Mr Ablitt in a complicated £20 million PONZI fraud. Leave to appeal conviction granted.

### **R v Benstead & Others (2015)**

Allegations of fraudulent trading and false accounting arising out of the collapse of the company Crown Currency Exchange (note: this was the first trial at Southwark Crown Court involving the use of ipads in place of physical jury bundles).

### **R v Cano-Uribe & Others (2014)**

10 handed fraud committed by employees of the company 'A4e'.

**R v Sanganee (2014)**

Land bank fraud.

**R v Choudhury (2013)**

High value mortgage fraud by one of Crimestoppers 'most wanted fraudsters'.

**R v Meghrabi (2013)**

Multi-million pound money laundering operation through bureaux de change.

**R v Cole & Another (2012)**

Cheating the revenue by an accountant and employee of HMRC.

**R v Harris & Others (2010)**

Conspiracy to defraud by directors of a building company

**R v Ariana & Others (2010)**

FSMA offences and conspiracy to defraud in connection with the operation of a Hedge fund

**R v Smallman & Others [2010] EWCA Crim 548**

One of a series of seven nationwide prosecutions against different defendants alleging fraud arising out of the collapse of the Government ILA scheme.

**R v De Rome & Others (2009)**

SFO prosecution for a \$30 million Ponzi fraud.

**R v Cushnie & Clough [2005] EWCA Crim 962**

SFO prosecution arising out of the multimillion pound collapse of the Versailles Group.

**CRIME**

**R v Dixon**

Prosecution of a defendant who hacked the websites of British Airways and others using DDOS attacks.

### **R v Hassan & others**

Large-scale money laundering of the proceeds of an identity fraud.

### **R v Oguntoye & others**

Multi-million pound money laundering of the proceeds of several international diversion frauds

### **R v Percival & others**

Money laundering allegation arising out of an attempt to have a restraint order lifted.

### **R v Gudelivicius (2015)**

Human trafficking and servitude offences.

### **R v George (2014)**

Death by dangerous driving.

### **R v Chopra & Others**

Large scale trademark offence conspiracy and associated money laundering.

## *Accreditation*

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