

## Helen Watts

**Year of Call:** 2009

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### Professional Career to date

Devil Masters: Alastair Duncan QC, Ronaldo Renucci.

2009: admitted to the Faculty of Advocates

2006 - 2008: Simpson and Marwick, Edinburgh

### Education & Professional Qualifications

Lord Reid Scholarship (2008 - 2009)

Diploma in Legal Practice (2006)

LLB with Distinction, 2005,

BA (Hons) (First Class), 2003

### Areas of Expertise

- Professional Liability
- Public Law, Judicial Review and Human Rights
- Commercial Contracts
- Product Liability
- Clinical Liability

### Professional Experience

Helen Watts specialises in professional liability, and has a particular interest in claims against medical and legal professionals. She has represented doctors and hospitals at complex and difficult Fatal Accident Inquiries, including the Inquiry into the deaths in George Square, Glasgow in December 2014, and is instructed to represent the Air Accident Investigation Branch in the Clutha helicopter Fatal Accident Inquiry due to begin in 2019.

Her professional liability experience includes cases involving engineers, architects, surveyors, auditors, investment fund managers and accountants. She is ranked by the Legal 500 and Chambers 2019 as a leading junior in both clinical liability and professional negligence matters.

She also acts on behalf of professionals, notably architects, solicitors and doctors, in professional regulatory matters and has experience of judicial reviews relating to professional disciplinary proceedings.

Helen is also regularly instructed in commercial and insurance disputes.

She was awarded the Lord Reid Scholarship for 2008-2009.

## Recent Cases

### Public and Fatal Accident Inquiries

Helen has been instructed in numerous inquiries. Examples include:

Fatal Accident Inquiry into the helicopter crash at the Clutha bar in Glasgow

Helen is instructed to represent the interests of the Air Accident Investigation Branch at this Inquiry in 2019.

Fatal Accident Inquiry into 6 deaths at George Square, Glasgow, in December 2014  
Helen acted as sole counsel to a doctor who had previously had contact with the driver of the bin lorry involved in the fatal collision in George Square.

Fatal Accident Inquiry into 14 deaths at Rosepark Care Home in January 2004  
Helen acted as junior counsel to James Wolffe QC and Robert QC in the largest and longest running FAI ever conducted in Scotland.

Fatal Accident Inquiry into the death of John Willock  
Helen represented the Out of Hours service provided by NHS Glasgow in this complex and long running medical FAI relating to the death of Mr Willock following various contacts with his GP, NHS24, and the Out of Hours service.

Fatal Accident Inquiry into the death of Judith Laing  
Helen represented NHS Glasgow in this medical FAI relating to the death of Mrs Laing, who died of complications following surgery for a femoral hernia.

Fatal Accident Inquiry into the death of Robert Cook  
Helen represented NHS Glasgow in this medical FAI relating to the death of Mr Cook Laing, who committed suicide in prison whilst under the care of psychiatric services

Fatal Accident Inquiry into the death of Andrew Hamilton  
Helen represented NHS Dumfries and Galloway in this medical FAI relating to the death of Mr Hamilton, who died of a heart attack at the age of 27.

### Clinical Liability

Helen has a very busy clinical liability practice including cases involving obstetrics, neurosurgery, neurology, oncology, cardiology, ophthalmology, haematology, dermatology, out of hours primary care, neurology, A&E and general practice.

She is ranked by both the Legal 500 and Chambers 2018 for clinical negligence.

Recent instructions include:

- Acting as Junior Counsel to Iain Ferguson QC in a complex claim about delayed diagnosis of a spinal fracture allegedly leading to neurological damage
- Acting as Junior Counsel to David Stephenson QC in an obstetric claim in which the sum sued for exceeded £10,000,000
- Acting as Junior Counsel to Alastair Duncan QC in a fatal claim about alleged delay in diagnosis of bowel cancer
- Acting as junior counsel to David Stephenson QC in a fatal claim about alleged delay in diagnosis of breast cancer
- Acting as sole counsel for the defenders in a fatal claim about an atypically presenting heart attack in a young woman
- Acting as sole counsel for the defenders in a fatal claim about a stillborn baby
- Acting as sole counsel for a consultant plastic surgeon in a claim about an allegedly negligently performed facelift
- Acting as sole counsel for the defenders in a claim about alleged delay in diagnosis of a rare subcutaneous t-cell lymphoma

- Acting as sole counsel for the defenders in a fatal claim about alleged consent deficiencies relating to surgery performed whilst the deceased was taking blood thinning medication

### **Professional Liability**

Helen has a very busy professional liability practice and is regularly instructed to act in claims relating to solicitors, advocates, accountants, surveyors and architects.

She is ranked by both the Legal 500 and Chambers 2018 for professional liability.

Recent instructions include:

- Acting as Junior Counsel to Roddy Dunlop QC in a seven figure claim relating to failure by solicitors to obtain a standard security in relation to loan funds advanced by a commercial lender
- Acting as Junior Counsel to Alistair Clark QC (as he then was) on behalf of the pursuers, a major commercial lender, in pursuing seven figure negligence claims against solicitors and surveyors relating to their advance of loan funds for the purchase of commercial property
- Acting as Junior Counsel to Heriot Currie QC for one of the defenders (a firm of architects) in a seven figure multi-party claim relating to construction and design defects at a major shopping centre
- Acting as Junior Counsel to Alastair Duncan QC for one of the defenders in a claim against both solicitors and counsel relating to alleged negligence by family lawyers relating to the preparation of a settlement agreement
- Acting as sole counsel for the pursuer in a claim against solicitors for allowing the time bar of her clinical negligence action against a health board

*David Whitehouse v Chief Constable of Police Scotland and the Lord Advocate 2018 CSOH 93:* Acting on behalf of Police Scotland in the claims brought against them by the former administrators of Glasgow Rangers Football Club

*Fatal Accident Inquiry into the deaths at George Square, Glasgow in December 2014:* Acting on behalf of a doctor who had previously treated the driver Harry Clark in the Glasgow bin lorry FAI.

*Cathcart v Law Society of Scotland 2013 CSOH 104:* Acting for a solicitor in an appeal against a sentence imposed by the Scottish Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal.

*Fatal Accident Inquiry into the death of John Willock:* Acting for Greater Glasgow Health Board in this complex and long running fatal accident inquiry.

### **Advocates Appointments & Memberships**

Standing Junior Counsel to the UK Government

### **Directories**

Chambers 2019 - ranked for both clinical negligence and professional liability: "I am extremely impressed by her level of work". "A very able counsel". "She is good, and practical".

Legal 500 2019 - ranked for both clinical negligence and professional negligence: "very intelligent with a great client manner". "Very experienced in claims against medical professionals"

Chambers 2018 - ranked for both clinical negligence and professional liability: "She's a doer, someone who just gets on with it. She's always got an eye on what the client wants to achieve and sets about achieving it. A no-nonsense operator, massively efficient". "She's organised and clear in her advice". "She is very proactive and has very good client relations". "Very pragmatic with an eye for detail".

Legal 500 2018 - ranked for both clinical negligence and professional negligence: "User friendly with meticulous attention to detail". "She shows great commercial awareness".