

Michael Harwood

Year of Call: 2012

Practice Summary

Michael specialises in public law, public inquiries, inquests and investigations. He is a ranked Leading Junior in Inquests and Inquiries and is a member of the Attorney General's Panel of Counsel.

Michael has extensive experience of major public inquiries, acting both as Counsel to the Inquiry and for core participants. He is currently instructed as counsel to the Manston Inquiry and previously acted for the Undercover Policing Inquiry, and for the Ministry of Defence in the Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan.

Alongside this work, Michael maintains a broad public law practice, advising and representing government departments, local authorities, regulators, organisations and individuals. He has particular experience in complex and sensitive matters involving public authorities, drawing on his previous career as a lawyer at the Government Legal Department.

Administrative & Public Law

Michael is a member of the Attorney General's C Panel of Counsel and has a broad public law practice, advising and representing government departments and other public authorities, both as sole counsel and as a junior.

His work includes judicial review, human rights, immigration and asylum, public authority liability and disputes concerning the exercise of statutory powers and duties. He regularly advises on the lawfulness of government decision-making and the management of legal risk, including in complex and politically sensitive matters.

Before joining Chambers, Michael worked at the Government Legal Department, undertaking litigation and advisory roles across a range of government functions. His experience included advising ministers and senior officials on policy development, legislative matters, judicial review litigation and public law risk. This background gives him particular insight into the legal, policy and

operational considerations affecting public authorities.

Inquiries, Inquests & Investigations

Michael has substantial experience of high-profile public inquiries, including acting as Counsel to the Inquiry and representing core participants. He is recognised as a Leading Junior in Inquests and Inquiries (Legal 500, 2027).

His inquiry practice encompasses complex evidential investigations, witness preparation and examination, disclosure, restrictions on sensitive material, and the provision of procedural and strategic advice throughout the inquiry process. His experience includes:

· Manston Inquiry – Currently instructed as junior counsel to the Inquiry examining the circumstances surrounding the treatment of people detained at the Manston Short-Term Holding Facility in 2022.

· Undercover Policing Inquiry – Junior counsel to the Inquiry investigating undercover policing practices in England and Wales since 1968. Michael was involved in the investigation and preparation of evidence and examined witnesses at public hearings.

· Independent Inquiry Relating to Afghanistan – Instructed as junior counsel representing the Ministry of Defence in the statutory inquiry concerning allegations arising from UK Special Forces operations in Afghanistan.

Michael also represents interested persons in coronial proceedings, including inquests engaging questions of public authority responsibility, operational decision-making and Article 2 ECHR. Selected instructions include:

· Inquest into the death of JD - Represented the Ministry of Defence in relation to a death following discharge from hospital.

· Inquest into the death of MB - Represented the Ministry of Justice in relation to a death at independent Approved Premises.

In addition to his public inquiry and inquests practice, Michael has undertaken independently commissioned investigations for public bodies, including investigating allegations, assessing evidence and preparing fact-finding reports. He was also a member of the Steering Group for the Independent Review of Bullying and Harassment at the Bar (2024–25), led by Baroness Harriet Harman KC.

Local Government

Michael accepts instructions on behalf of local authorities on a broad range of matters, including public law, human rights, equality, education, health and social care, data protection and freedom of information.

He regularly appears in the Court of Protection, acting in proceedings involving mental capacity, best interests, deprivation of liberty and adult health and social care.

Sanctions

Michael has particular expertise in financial sanctions, having previously advised the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (‘OFSI’) on the operation and development of the UK's financial sanctions regimes, including the introduction of the UK's autonomous sanctions framework following EU Exit. He continues to advise on sanctions compliance, licensing, designation challenges and related issues.

Sport, Media & Entertainment

Michael provides advice and representation to athletes, players, teams and governing bodies on the full range of sporting issues, including eligibility and selection, disciplinary, anti-doping, safeguarding, governance and contractual disputes. Michael is a member of the Sport Resolutions pro bono panel, and regularly acts via public access for individual athletes facing disciplinary or other sports governing body processes.

Michael holds a Masters degree in Sports Law and Practice. His Masters thesis analysed the legal remedies available to athletes and players sanctioned for exercising their right to free speech, and he is well versed in advising on the intersection between legal rights and sporting regulation.

Appointments

- Attorney General’s Panel of Counsel (C)
- Legal Advisor, Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime
- Sports Resolutions Pro Bono Panel
- Chair of the Young Bar of England & Wales (2023)

Memberships

- Chair of Young Bar of England & Wales, 2023
- Sports Resolutions Pro Bono Panel
- ALBA

Qualifications

- Qualified Public Access

Areas of Expertise

- Administrative Public Law
- Inquiries And Inquests
- Local Government
- Sport Media And Entertainment