Sophie Belgrove KC

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Sophie Belgrove is a specialist in employment law and commercial litigation. She advises and represents clients in the Employment Tribunal, the High Court and the appellate courts. Her practice encompasses all aspects of employment law including high value discrimination and whistleblowing claims. She is experienced in complex litigation in particular urgent applications for injunctive relief and business protection disputes in the High Court relating to confidential information, restraint of trade and breach of fiduciary duties. She advises and acts in disputes involving shareholders and directors and in partnership disputes. Sophie is also known for her specialist expertise in employment-related insurance disputes. She has extensive experience of advising and representing clients in the financial services sector, including investment banks and brokers. She is recognised as a leading practitioner in Chambers UK and in the Legal 500.

> ***She prepares meticulously for her cases, is a tenacious cross-examiner and has excellent client care skills.***
>
> CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

Expertise

Employment

Sophie advises and represents clients in the Employment Tribunal, the High Court and the appellate courts. Her practice encompasses all aspects of employment law including high value discrimination and whistleblowing claims. She is experienced in complex litigation in particular urgent applications for injunctive relief and claims in the High Court relating to confidential information, restraint of trade and breach of fiduciary duties. She has conducted sensitive internal investigations involving staff at a senior level in high profile organisations. Sophie is also known for her specialist expertise in employment-related insurance disputes. She has extensive experience of advising and representing clients in the financial services sector, including investment banks and brokers.

> ***Sophie Belgrove is client-friendly and has the ability to absorb a lot of detail.***
>
> CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

Whistleblowing

Sophie is highly sought after in high profile whistleblowing cases. She has dealt with numerous complex multi-million pound disputes, both as sole counsel and as junior to leading silks at the Bar. She has exceptional expertise in disputes in the financial sector, which frequently involve commercially sensitive matters and external regulatory issues. She is accustomed to being involved from an early stage, and has substantial experience of applications at short notice for interim relief, specific disclosure applications and strike out applications. Sophie was recently invited to speak at the ELA Annual Conference 2016 on the subject of whistleblowing.

Discrimination and equal pay

Sophie has extensive experience of all areas of discrimination (in particular sex, race, disability, religion and belief and sexual orientation) and equal pay. She often acts for well-known companies, and is accustomed to appearing in multi-week hearings involving all forms of discrimination, including claims of direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment. She also acts in the civil courts in discrimination claims in the services sector.

Individual and collective employment rights

Sophie advises employers and employees on all aspects of the employment relationship, including flexible and part-time working and the Working Time Regulations (including holiday issues), unlawful deductions from wages, pensions, and the legal aspects of business restructuring, including TUPE and redundancies (individual and collective). Sophie is regularly instructed in relation to issues arising out of the termination of employment, including bonus disputes, breach of contract, unfair dismissal and redundancy. Sophie has also been instructed in significant industrial action disputes.

Evidence/procedure

Sophie frequently advises on procedural and evidential issues arising in the course of litigation including disclosure, privilege, costs and jurisdictional matters, including the territorial jurisdiction of the Employment Tribunal, choice of forum (Employment Tribunal/High Court), time points, illegality, employee status and issue estoppel.

High court including injunctions

Sophie has specialist expertise in cases of restraint of trade and urgent interim relief. She regularly advises in high value disputes involving directors, senior employees and competitors. She has extensive experience of team move litigation and claims of breach of confidence and breach of fiduciary duties against directors and senior executives. She also acts and advises in high value contractual claims including bonus, partnership and shareholder disputes.

Employment-related insurance

Sophie has particular expertise in relation to employment-related insurance. She advises in relation to permanent health insurance (PHI) policies and other group policies including group life assurance policies. She has obtained High Court injunctive relief preventing the dismissal of an employee entitled to PHI benefits. Sophie has given seminars to employment and insurance firms in this specialist area.

Restrictive covenants and injunctions

Sophie has specialist expertise in cases of restraint of trade and urgent interim relief. She regularly advises in high value disputes involving directors, senior employees and competitors. She has extensive experience of team move litigation and claims of breach of confidence and breach of fiduciary duties against directors and senior executives. She has obtained High Court injunctive relief preventing the dismissal of an employee entitled to PHI benefits.

Pay, incentives and pensions

Sophie regularly advises in relation to disputes regarding the contractual rights of employees. She has experience of advising and acting in disputes involving bonuses, commission, enhanced redundancy entitlements, share options and pension rights. She also advises in disputes over partnership pay and status and the rights and obligations of departing partners.

Investigations

Sophie has conducted sensitive internal investigations involving staff at a senior level in high profile organisations: she recently conducted a major investigation for a high profile regulatory body into recruitment practices at the highest levels of management of the organisation and a grievance investigation for an international firm.

C v X (a worldwide broadcasting organisation)

2017

High profile claim against media organisation by senior reporter alleging protected disclosure in respect of alleged political influence and sex discrimination. Sophie successfully sought strike-out of the claim mid-way through the hearing.

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C v X (a major financial institution)

(2015-2016)

High profile whistleblowing claim by a senior trader. The claim for £4.25 million involved allegations of serious financial irregularities of a highly sensitive nature.

W v X (an NGO in the finance industry)

(2015-2016)

Defended an application for interim relief in a high value claim.

G and D v X (a major financial institution)

2012

Led by Chris Jeans KC in a multi-million pound claim involving senior individuals in the trading division of a major financial institution.

M v X (a major investment bank)

2016

High profile multi-million pound claim of race discrimination against senior traders at city investment bank

J v X (a national newspaper group)

(2015-2016)

Claim involving extensive allegations of age discrimination, sex discrimination, harassment and victimisation at the offices of a national newspaper group.

H v X (a major international airline)

(2014-2015)

Long-running disability discrimination claim by a pilot involving allegations of direct discrimination, disability-related discrimination and failure to make reasonable adjustments.

B and others v X (leading car manufacturer)

2012

Case involving wide-scale collective redundancies, with a series of multi-week hearings.

BA cabin crew litigation

(2011/12)

Sophie dealt with a number of cases linked to the high profile BA cabin crew industrial action.

C v X (international facilities management provider)

2016

One of a series of cases in which Sophie was instructed concerning the territorial jurisdiction of the employment tribunal in relation to an overseas British military base.

T v X (a technology firm)

(2014-2015)

Heavily contested race and sex discrimination claim in which the statutory defence was invoked.

E and others v X (major port operator) and others

2014

High stakes multi-party TUPE action for leading port operator following transfer of services to a new location.

Associated British Ports v Bridgeman

[2012] IRLR 639

Led by Bruce Carr KC in this complex case involving a consideration of rest breaks and daily rest provided for by the Working Time Regulations 1998. The EAT made a reference to the European Court Justice (case then settled).

K v X (a major construction firm)

(2010-2014)

Having successfully defended a whistleblowing claim (led by Bruce Carr KC), Sophie (acting alone) obtained a costs award believed to be the highest made by the employment tribunal (of nearly £500,000).

C v X (a financial institution)

2016

Case involving complex issues of privilege.

X (a global commodities broker) v C, G and others

(2016), QBD

Acted on behalf of the employer in relation to a team move, seeking an injunction to restrain breaches of express and implied terms of the defendants' contracts of employment and breach of post-termination restrictive covenants.

X (a global commodities broker) v C, G and others

(2016), QBD

Acted on behalf of the employer in relation to a team move, seeking an injunction to restrain breaches of express and implied terms of the defendants' contracts of employment and breach of post-termination restrictive covenants.

A (an insurer) v F

(2015-2016), TCC

Acted for an insurance company in relation to a claim for clawback of commission payments.

X (a media company) v J and others

(2015), QBD

Acted for defendants in relation to an application for an injunction in the media sector against former employees for breach of contract, misuse of confidential information and infringement of copyright.

X (a media company) v J and others

(2015), QBD

Acted for defendants in relation to an application for an injunction in the media sector against former employees for breach of contract, misuse of confidential information and infringement of copyright.

I-P v X (a major investment bank)

(2014-2016), QBD

Ongoing breach of contract and negligent misstatement claim by the former employee of a major investment bank relating to the provision of a reference to prospective employers.

P v X (an engineering consultancy)

2016

Acting and advising in relation to a dispute regarding group life assurance and group income protection

G v X(a healthcare provider)

(2013), QBD

Obtained an interim injunction to restrain the employer from dismissing the employee in order to preserve her entitlement to benefit.

G v X(a healthcare provider)

(2013), QBD

Obtained an interim injunction to restrain the employer from dismissing the employee in order to preserve her entitlement to benefit.

J v X (a law firm)

(2013-2014)

Advised the proposed claimant partner in respect of her entitlement to payment of permanent health insurance benefit in circumstances where there was no express entitlement to benefit in the contract of employment.

X (foreign exchange firm) v A

(2014), QBD

Acting for a foreign exchange firm seeking an injunction to restrain breach of restrictive covenants.

Q v X (a recruitment agency)

(2014), QBD

Defending an application for an interim injunction against a recruitment agency in relation to a non-competition covenant.

X (a major wine merchant) v C

(2013), QBD

Acting for a major wine merchant in relation to the actions of a former employee in starting a competing business

X (an accountancy firm) v G and others

(2013), QBD

Acting for accountancy firm in relation to a team move.

Achievements

News, Articles & Publications

'Unbundling unshackled' (NLJ, 18 March 2016; co-author): Reviewing the nature and extent of solicitors' duties under a limited retainer. Read here.

'The worst of both worlds – examining commercial agents' (NLJ, 22 January 2016; co-author): Considering the position of commercial agents. Read here.

'Dismissing employees with PHI benefits: a step too far?' (ELA Briefing, June 2011; co-author): Examining the options available to parties in PHI disputes. Read here.

Education

University of Oxford, BA

Other

Recent seminars

- Sophie was recently invited to speak at the ELA Annual Conference 2016 on the subject of whistleblowing. The paper for the session, *'Whistle while you work or whistling in the wind?'* can be found here.
- *'Disclosure in the Employment Tribunal'* (2015) for Berwin Leighton Paisner.
- *'High Court litigation – restrictive covenants, confidentiality and injunctions – what's new?'* (2015) for employment and commercial solicitors.
- *'Permanent health insurance – who benefits?'* (2014 and 2015) for employment and commercial solicitors, and repeated for Clyde & Co.

- *'High Court tactics'* (2014) for DLA Piper.
- *'Tricky issues in litigation'* (2014) for IHELN.

Memberships and committees

- Member of ELA, ELBA, ILS, COMBAR, LCLCBA, BILA, PNBA.
- Committee member of South Eastern Circuit Access to Justice Working Group. Sophie chaired the sub-group responsible for drafting the response to the report by JUSTICE, 'Delivering Justice in an Age of Austerity' (2015), and for drafting the response to the report by Lord Justice Briggs, 'Civil Courts Structure Review: Interim Report' (2016).

> ***She has a very intellectual and detail-oriented approach, combined with a supreme team-player attitude.***
>
> CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

> ***A thoughtful, technically very accurate and responsive barrister who gets properly involved.***
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> CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

> ***One of the very strongest employment juniors at the Bar. A genuine star.***
>
> LEGAL 500

> ***She is very commercial, responsive and good on her feet; her cross-examination style is very effective but subtle and the [witness] does not realise they are being undermined.***
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> CHAMBERS & PARTNERS

> ***Very approachable and down to earth.***
>
> LEGAL 500

> ***A first class junior... She is hands-on and constructive, gets to grips quickly with the matters at issue, and has a keen eye for detail.***
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> CHAMBERS UK

She achieves great results and is a real hit with clients.

LEGAL 500

She is a very strong advocate who is rightfully highly regarded.

CHAMBERS UK

She's going to be a real star... She sees the big picture well and is commercially astute.

CHAMBERS UK