Ioana Nedelcu



YEAR OF CALL 2012

Ioana is an impressive barrister with a particular interest in modern slavery and serious organised crime. She is regularly instructed in a wide range of high profile criminal cases and has a reputation for winning cases against all odds.

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Career Overview

Ioana is a determined and extremely able advocate, always quick to impress. She is tenacious and relentlesly hard-working, as well as particularly versed in disclosure issues, all abilities that have led to her instruction in high profile cases including gang related murders, the largest known modern slavery conspiracy in Europe and the Boodles diamond heist. She also acts as a leading junior counsel in a paper heavy drugs conspiracy and serious violence and represents Defendants in cases prosecuted by silks.

Ioana's practice focuses on complex, high profile cases with a particular interest in serious organised crime and modern slavery offences. She is fearless in cross examination and a charismatic, but robust advocate. She never shies away from a legal argument, and is always praised for her legal mind. Her ability to engage with the jury often leds to swift acquittals in cases against the odds.

As the go to counsel for Modern Slavery offences and ancillary Slavery and Trafficking Risk/Prevention Orders and Forfeiture, Ioana is often able to negotiate favourable terms or argue against an order being made. She gives realistic advice and drafts persuasive written representations often resulting in the conclusion of the case in her clients' favour.

Ioana is generally involved from an incipient phase in modern slavery cases and walks her lay clients and instructing solicitors through the process from their first arrest.

Ioana is ranked as a leading individual in Chambers and Partners and Legal 500:

“Ioana is the complete package at the criminal bar. She is exceptionally bright, meticulous in her preparation, and always provides first-class client care. Ioana is my go-to barrister for serious crime.” (L500 edn. 2026)

Ioana Nedelcu (Fraud and white-collar crime): “A real star in the making: she is tenacious in defense of her client and highly impressive.” (L500 edn. 2026)

'Ioana is a remarkable junior. She is exceptionally hard-working, articulate, driven and determined. She is fearless but shows excellent judgement and has a kindness and compassion with clients that is hard to match.’ (L500 edn. 2025)

'Ioana's attention to detail and photographic memory are phenomenal.' (C&P 2025)

‘Ioana is an exceptionally bright junior with a good strategic mind for even the most delicate of situations. An extremely thorough barrister, she knows cases inside out. She has a stellar future ahead of her.’ (edn. 2024)

'Ioana stands out from the crowd in almost all areas of her practice. She is a tenacious and fearless advocate who never shies away from even the most uncomfortable or adversarial of circumstances.' (edn. 2023)

‘Ioana’s ability to hold the clients’ attention and engage positively to glean further instructions is second to none and invaluable when dealing with difficult clients. She has a brain for detail and absorbs more information about a case than anyone at the Bar. Years after concluding a case she will still remember the names and even phone numbers of those involved. She has a relaxed and easy-going style which both clients and solicitors admire.’ (edn. 2022)

‘She has a ferocious work ethic, and punches well above her year of call. She approaches every case confidently and creatively. Through hard work and persistence, I have seen her obtain brilliant results in almost impossible cases. Great with disclosure, Ioana is often instructed in lengthy and paper heavy cases. Her memory is second to none and her ability to digest complex issues and large amounts of information quickly never fails to impress.’ (edn. 2021)

Area of Practice

Ioana accepts instructions in a large spectrum of criminal offences with a particular focus in the following areas:

- Serious organised crime;
- Cyber crime;
- Gang related serious crime including murders;
- Modern slavery and Slavery and Trafficking Risk/Prevention Orders;
- Serious drugs and firearms;
- Forfeiture;

Notable Cases

Murder/Manslaughter:

R v RB - Wolverhampton Crown Court - 5 handed attempted murder (shooting) and possession of firearms with intent to endanger life

Ioana represents a Defendant charged with attempted murder and possession of firearms with intent to endanger life. This was an organised attempt, with five men said to have atended the scene of the shooting. The case involves CCTV evidence, significant phone contact and cell site, bad character evidence, and a cut throat that developed as part of the trial. There is a retrial in January 2026.

R v ZS - Central Criminal Court - Conspiracy to Murder, Conspiracy to commit GBH, Conspiracy to Possess Firearm with Intent to Endanger Life, PWITS class B and 5 x Possession of Firearms and Ammunition.

Ioana acted as leading counsel in Operation Maylog for the second Defendant, ZS. After 8 days of trial, the Crown agreed a plea on lesser basis, namely perverting the course of justice and possession with intent to supply class B drugs. The Defendant was released on bail (opposed by the Crown) a month after the pleas were entered and was sentenced to time served.

R v IAP - Central Criminal Court - Attempted murder and GBH

Ioana was led by Claire Davies KC in the highly publicised case that saw an 11 year old stabbed several times in Leicester Square. Several psychiatrists were instructed and they all concluded that the Defendant had been very unwell mentally. The Crown accepted a plea to the GBH in light of the Defendant's mental health and defence statement and this resulted in an indefinite hospital order to allow the Defendant to receive treatment.

R v ICB - Wood Green Crown Court - attempted murder (stabbing)

Ioana's client who was 16 years old at the time of the alleged offenced stood charge with attempted murder. At the outset of the case he pleaded Guilty to the offence of causing GBH with intent (s.18). Prison recordings whereby the Defendant admitted to being one of the stabbers in the case were adduced as part of the case. At the start of the case, Ioana excluded a significant amount of the prison recordings and the bad character of the Defendant. The Defendant did not give evidence. There was a hung jury, retrial in August 2025. ICB was acquitted at the re-trial.

R v KBB [Operation Wavetrim] - Central Criminal Court - Murder, Conspiracy to murder, Conspiracy to possess firearm with intent to endager life

Led by Claire Davies KC, Ioana was instructed to defend in an alleged gang related murder where the victim was killed in a shooting. CCTV and phone data was used to identify the Defendants. The case involved extensive consideration and challenge of cell site, GPS tag readings, phone expert and bad character namely gang related evidence, drill music videos and hearsay. The trial was heard over 3 months at the Old Bailey. Ioana's client was first on the Indictment. After two weeks of deliberations, the jury convicted four of the remaining five Defendants and could not reach a verdict on Ioana's client. There was a retrial in September 2024 and KBB was aquitted of all counts on the Indictment.

R v ES [Operation Adamroad] - Central Criminal Court - Murder and 2 x Attempted GBH

Led by KC, Ioana was instructed to defend in an alleged murder and two attempted murders resulting from a suspected drug feud where the victim's car was rammed in by two vehicles and shot at several times with a shotgun.

R v ND [Operation Rutink] - Birmingham Crown Court - Murder, Manslaughter, Robbery, Possession of a balded article

Led by Claire Davies KC, Ioana was instructed to defend a young man who stood charged with murder and robbery. The Defendant, who required an intermediary throughout part of the proceedings, was jointly charged with two others, and he was caught on CCTV chasing the victim with a rambo knife. Ioana's client was acquitted of murder.

R v EA [Operation Dynastic] - Warwick Crown Court - Murder (diminished responsability - Manslaughter)

Led by KC, Ioana was instructed to defend a grandmother who killed her 5 year old grandson by way of stabbing him repeatedly. The case involved a large number of expert reports in the field of psychiatry and issues of insanity / diminished responsability. In a highly emotional case, with the Crown's own psychiatrist noting that she was very

unwell when she committed the act, it was recognised by four different psychiatrists that she had the defence of diminished responsibility available to her. EA entered a Guilty plea to manslaughter by diminished responsibility. The sentence was reserved to Mrs. Justice Cockerill who sentenced EA to an indefinite hospital order noting that she has no doubt that EA would never have hurt, let alone kill her grandson had she not been very ill. The case attracted widespread media attention.

R v DG [Operation Chestnut] - Leicester Crown Court - Murder, manslaughter

Led by KC, Ioana was instructed to defend in this joint enterprise murder of a man. Ioana's client was alleged to have thrown the punch that killed the victim. He fled the jurisdiction within less than 24 hours from the incident. Ioana's client was acquitted of murder.

R v WC [Operation Outfit] - Mold Crown Court - Manslaughter by negligence

Led by QC to defend in a gross negligence manslaughter. Case heard by a High Court Judge. The case was particularly sensitive and involved unusual facts and it was alleged that the Defendant breached his duty of care towards his partner whilst engaging in consensual bondage sexual intercourse. The Defence sucessfully severed the Indictment and excluded significant bad character evidence in advance of the trial. The case attracted widespread media attention.

R v NT [Operation Lapis] - Wolverhampton Crown Court - Murder (stabbing)

Led by QC to defend a 17 year old charged with the murder of a 15 year old as part of ongoing gang warfare. The Defendant, was said to be one of the four to have inflicted over 40 stab wounds that led to the quick death of the victim. The case lasted four months and involved extensive telephone and forensic evidence and complex legal submissions on the admissability of gang related evidence, drill music videos, hearsay and bad character evidence. The case attracted widespread media attention. Ioana also represented the Defendant in the Court of Appeal at his appeal against conviction. Upon the completion of the case, in recognition for her work in the case, Ioana was presented with a red bag by her leading counsel.

Modern Slavery:

R v WN [Operation Huai] - Southwark Crown Court

Led by KC, Ioana represented WN who faces a number of modern slavery, controlling prostitution and money laundering charges. Ioana successfully represented WN in previous civil proceedings where the District Judge refused to make a Slavery and Trafficking Risk Order against her.

R v AN [Operation Vansfare] - Southwark Crown Court

Ioana represented a Defendant who faces an Indictment that alleges modern slavery offences, controlling prostitution and money laundering charges.

R v PM - Oxford Crown Court

Ioana appeared for the Appellant (a young man) in an appeal against conviction on slavery, facilitation, drugs supply and possession of criminal property charges. The Appellant was convicted in the Oxford Youth Court and the matters were committed for sentence as the DJ noted that the Defendant is looking at a lengthy custodial sentence. The appeal was allowed on the facilitation and slavery charges. Although the appeal was dismissed on the drug related charges, the tribunal found that the Appellant who had a history of being trafficked within a county line for a number of years, was in the lowest category and culpability and sentenced to a 24 month community order. A modern slavery expert was instructed and gave evidence in these proceedings. Reported in the news, read more.

R v VL [Operation Cardinas] – Blackfriars Crown Court

Ioana defended the second Defendant in Operation Cardinas, a cross border investigation into modern slavery offences that involved both the British and the Romanian authorities. VL was acquitted by the jury, after the judge acceded to half time submissions in relation to all the counts on the indictment, namely, conspiracy to require others to perform forced labour, conspiracy to traffick people from Romania into the UK and money laundering (of over £2 million). Reported in the news, read more.

R v MC [Operation Fort] – Birmingham Crown Court

Ioana was instructed for the first Defendant in Operation Fort. This was a 4-month trial involving a number of offences under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Operation Fort is to date the largest investigation into modern slavery offences in Europe. The case involved over 80 Complainants and over 1.3 million pages of evidence were served as part of the prosecution case, including a vast amount of telephone and banking evidence. MC was the first on the Indictment and his role was mainly to take people to the banks and able to show the "respectable face of the conspiracy" assisting the leader of the conspiracy.This case was described as “the most ambitious, extensive and prolific modern-day slavery ever exposed in the UK,” with over 400 people being trafficked from Poland into the UK, threatened with violence,

forced into work arranged via agencies and made to live in squalid accommodations. Bank accounts and benefit claims were opened in their names, but the cards were kept by the conspirators, for their own use. Reported in the news, read more.

Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders:

R v TM [Operation Gazania] - St Albans Magistrates Court

Ioana represented a Respondent in a Slavery and Trafficking Risk Order application. The Crown have offered no evidence in relation to the slavery charges but the police continue to make an application to keep the Respondent and others under significant restrictions for 5 years. After a number of disclosure requests were made, the police dropped the case against the Respondents.

R v WN [Operation Huai] - Westminster Magistrates Court

Following a three day hearing at Westminster Magistrates Court (counsel certificate), Ioana argued that if such a trafficking conspiracy ever existed, her client was most likely a victim and the police have ignored clear modern slavery hallmarks in the evidence by relying solely on one unreliable witness who had given three different accounts on a number of occasions. District Judge Goozee, delivering judgement on Friday 6th November 2020, agreed with Ioana's submissions. The application made on behalf of the Metropolitan police was dismissed.

R v MC [Operation Fort] - Birmingham Magistrates Court

Ioana represented MC in one of the first ever applications for an Interim Slavery and Trafficking Risk Order.

Human Trafficking:

R v MH [Operation Submedian] - Maidstone Crown Court

Six handed conspiracy to smuggle 10 vietnamese nationals in the UK.

R v IR - Canterbury Crown Court

Two handed conspiracy to smuggle three Albanian nationals in the UK.

Drugs:

R v CVR - Norwich Crown Court

Ioana represented CVR in a case involving kilograms of supplying class A drugs.

R v RP [Operation Carmine] - Snaresbrook Crown Court

Ioana acted for a young man charged with Conspiracy to supply MDMA as part of a large operation of class A, B & C supply. The case proceeded through a trial and a re-trial where the Crown eventually offered no evidence based on submissions made at court by counsel.

R v RP [Operation Tattoo] - Winchester Crown Court

Ioana acted as leading counsel in this 7-handed conspiracy to supply class A drugs. The case involved over 100,000 pages of evidence and over 2 million pages of unused evidence. The case against the Defendant relied purely on telephone evidence and the Defence prepared extensive schedules including the telephone evidence extracted from handsets and call data. Reported in the news, read more.

R v IH [Operation Distant] - St Albans Crown Court

Ioana represented IH who was alleged to be the leader of a wide conspiracy supplying class A Drugs. The prosecution case rested significantly on encrochat evidence.

R v JC - Worcester Crown Court

Ioana sucessfuly represented a Defendant accused of drugs supply. Unanimous Not Guilty verdict against all odds. The case involved examination of phones, including disputing attribution for a phone that was linked to drug dealing.

R v OD - Oxford Crown Court

Ioana represented the alleged head of a successful class A drugs county line in the South Oxfordshire area. Following a Newton Hearing, the judge was persuaded that he cannot be certain on the evidence that the Defendant was the head of the county line. The argument involved thorough analysis of the telephone evidence and the instruction of cell site and call data expert. Reported in the news.

Dishonesty Offences:

R v AK [Operation Nonejection] - Southwark Crown Court - Conspiracy to steal and handle high value vehicles.

Ioana represented AK. AK was alleged to be involved in a Category 1 offence, in a Leading role. AK pleaded on a basis of plea that limited his involvement in the vehicles stolen and handled. When sentencing, the judge started at 5 years

and following careful mitigation submissions on delay, totality, credit and personal mitigation the judge sentenced AK to a 2 year suspended sentence order. For more information on the case, click here.

R v LF [Operation Octagon] - Southwark Crown Court - Money laundering conspiracy

Ioana led by Martin Mccarthy was instructed in a 8 weeks trial whereby the Defendant was alleged to be part of a conspiracy engaged in the laundering of proceeds from mandate and advance fee frauds - the benefit was alleged to be over £4 million. The Defendant, who was tried in avsence, was acquitted of the most substantial counts on the Indictment (money laundering and fraud of over £4 million) and convicted of a conspiracy to defraud American Express of £40,000.

R v NH [Operation Malina] - Snaresbrook Crown Court - Conspiracy to defraud

Ioana was instructed as sole counsel in a conspiracy to defraud Boots and Tesco. Ioana represented a young woman in her 20s who claimed that she has been the subject of 10 years of exploitation and did not participate in the commission of the fraud voluntarily. The modern slavery defence under s.45 Modern Slavery Act 2015 was raised. The case involved extensive telephone and banking evidence, as well as live evidence from a number of young victims of exploitation. It is believed that this is the first ever modern slavery fraud case and Ioana's client was the only Defendant charged with the conspiracy to defraud to be acquitted to date. For news links click here for the Times article and other news here.

R v KA - Harrow (Barbican) Crown Court - Money laundering

Ioana secured a swift Not Guilty verdict in a money laundering case involving the transportation of over £120,000 in cash alleged to be criminal property. Ioana cross examined the officer in the case and highlighted systematic failures of the police to act upon information received in the police interview. The case was heard at the Barbican Nightingale court.

R v LL [Operation Franklin] - Southwark Crown Court - Diamonds Heist

Ioana represented a Defendant who stood charged with stealing £4.2 million worth of diamonds from a high profile jewellery shop in Mayfair, in a heist likened to the Ocean's Eleven movie. The case was reported in the national and international news. See the Times and other news articles.

R v VM [Operation Stock] - Northampton Crown Court - Conspiracy to steal livestock

Ioana represented one of the men accused of a conspiracy to steal livestock, namely the illegal slaughter of at least 320 sheep belonging to farmers in the Northamptonshire area. The case and the disturbing method of slaughter have

been highly publicised. Reported in the news.

R v RM [Operation Gwendreath] - Southwark Crown Court - Conspiracy to steal high value cars

Ioana represented the Defendant in Operation Gwendreath who allegedly conspired to steal high value cars in the range of £10 million.

R v EI [Operation Buccina] – Inner London Crown Court - Diamonds heist

Ioana represented the first Defendant in Operation Buccina. The Defendant was accused of a conspiracy to steal over £1,000,000 worth of diamonds. She accepted that she disguised herself in a niqab and burka and accompanied the male who stole the diamonds but stated that she did not know anything was to be stolen. Crown's case relied heavily on phone evidence. The Defence relied on the phone evidence that was not part of the Crown's schedules, creating a detailed call schedule to prove wider involvement of others lower on the Indictment. Unanimous Not Guilty verdict in an hour. The Defendant, a single mother and five, was released after 7 months in custody. Reported in the news.

R v SA [Operation Shine] – Bristol Crown Court - Conspiracy to burgle and handling stolen goods

Ioana represented the first Defendant in Operation Shine. The trial, listed for 6-8 weeks involved eleven Defendants who conspired to burgle and later, to handle stolen goods to the value of £2million from the home address of a member of the public. The case involved legal arguments in very novel areas of law, such as entrapment, the admissibility of PGP evidence [a telephone that is designed to protect those who wish to remain anonymous to the police] as well as lengthy submissions of no case to answer.The Judge acceded to a submission of no case to answer on the count alleging burglary and in November 2019 the Crown offered no evidence in relation to the handling stolen goods and Not Guilty verdicts were officially entered. Reported in the news.

Offences Against the Person/Firearms:

R v SM - Snaresbrook Crown Court - Causing or allowing serious injury to be caused to a child

Ioana represented the only Defendant to be acquitted of causing/allowing serious injury to be caused to a 2 year old child who was seriously harmed.

R v RV - Luton Crown Court - Grievous bodily harm

Ioana represented one of the seven Defendants who attacked a man who was returning a faulty phone. The prosecution alleged that Ioana's client was part of the three that attacked the male and caused serious injuries and that her client kicked the victim to the head whilst he was on the floor, having just been attacked with brooms, a metal pole and a brick. Ioana's client was acquitted of grievous bodily harm.

R v EA - Manchester Crown Court [Operation Northolt] - Possession of firearm with intent

Ioana represented a man who was allegedly part of an organised criminal group that conspired to shoot at a property for revenge reasons. The case is entirely dependant on call data, involving cell site experts and issues raising bad character evidence. A successful application was made by the Defence to discharge the jury when a co-Defendant charged with assisting an OCG unexpectadely entered Guilty pleas mid trial.

R v CR - Warwick Crown Court - Possession of firearms and drugs

Ioana rerepsented the lead Defendant who is allegedly the head of an OCG controlling a large stash of firearms and drugs.

R v AH - Birmingham Crown Court - Armed robbery x 4

Ioana represented a young child charged with four armed robberies where machetes were used and violence erupted. Ioana negotiated a plea to two robberies instead of four and persuaded the judge to impose a Youth Rehabilitation Order instead of a custodial sentence, in spite of the aggravating features of the robberies.

R v DEB - Isleworth Crown Court - Firearms and perverting the course of justice

Ioana represented a 45 year old woman charged with concealing a firearm during a police raid. The prosecution was persuaded to drop the firearms count and the Defedant entered a Guilty plea to perverting the course of justice. In spite of having similar previous convictions, the judge aceeded to the submissions made by Ioana and sentenced the Defendant to a suspended sentence.

R v NG - Wolverhampton Crown Court - GBH, 2 x possession of machete

Ioana represented a 15 year old child involved in the stabbing of another child within a gang related background. Ioana's client had two previous convictions for possession of dangerous bladed articles, mostly machetes.

Sexual offences:

R v FS - Snaresbrook Crown Court - Rape x 2, Intentional Strangulation, Controlling and

coercive, ABH.

Ioana represented FS for a 14 day trial. The allegation was that FS had raped and controlled his wife over the course of 6 months. The Defence was quite the opposite, the Defendant was controlled by his wife. His wife withdrew the allegations with the police, but the CPS continued irrespective of a number of reviews requested. The Defence bundle contained tens of pages of messages confirming the defence. The trial involved significant legal arguments related to abuse of process, opposal of special measures and exclusion of ABEs, bad character applications, submissions of no case to answer at half time and after the Defendant's evidence. The Defendant was swiftly acquitted of all counts. Ioana was privately instructed.

R v IB - Kingston Crown Court - Rape x 2, Sexual assaults x 5.

Ioana represented IB for a 5 day trial, followed by swift acquittals. The allegation was that IB a man in his 50s raped and sexually assaulted his 19 year old daughter's best friend, after getting her drunk. There was CCTV of the Complainant running out of the house without shoes on. The Defence was consent. Ioana was privately instructed.

Forfeiture:

R v RK – Chelmsford Magistrates Court

Following written representations drafted by Ioana, the police agreed to release £15,000 despite a finding that 21% of the notes were contaminated with cocaine at a significant level.

R v AC - Camberwell Green Magistrates Court

Successfully persuaded the tribunal on the balance of probabilities that C is entitled to reclaim his £12,000 in cash from the police. C was a Romanian citizen and was suspected of being part of a criminal organised group that was involved in stealing cards from nightclubs.

Memberships

Ioana is a member of the Gray's Inn, Criminal Bar Association, Women in Criminal Law and Lawn Tennis Society as well as part of the Chambers' Management Committee.

Education

- University College of London, LLM
- Gray's Inn call to the Bar (2012)
- City Law School, Bar Practice Training Course

Other Information

Ioana speaks fluent Romanian. She also speaks Spanish and German, as well as basic French.

Whilst practicing as a barrister, Ioana also completed an LLM at UCL (flexible mode). She has a keen interest in international and national security law, with a focus on cyber-crime and terrorism. She received a distinction for her thesis drafted on the ability of the UK to respond with force in self defence against the most serious of cyber-attacks that are attributed to hostile states and whether the law is clear enough to avoid an international conflict.

In her free time, Ioana leads an active lifestyle and enjoys tennis and skiing. She has a keen interest in fashion and arts.