

Ex-head of Crown Prosecution Service becomes first to NOT get damehood in New Years Honours List after rape trial collapses and failure to charge Labour peer Lord Janner for child sex claims



- Alison Saunders stepped down as Director of Public Prosecutions in October
- Her predecessors were handed senior honours during or soon after their tenure
- But Ms Saunders will be snubbed after presiding over a series of blunders

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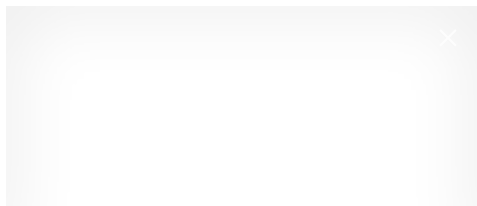
By [JAMES WOOD FOR MAILONLINE](#)

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A former head of the Crown Prosecution Service has become the first not to receive a damehood in the New Year's Honours List - after a series of blunders while in post.

Alison Saunders, 57, was forced to stand down as Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) earlier this year after the Government declined to extend her contract. [read more](#)

She had been under scrutiny over a raft of scandals - including the collapse of a series of rape trials after late disclosure of evidence to defence lawyers, which led to a review of every case in the country.



In a break from tradition, Ms Saunders will not receive a senior honour this New Year - unlike her predecessors, all of whom received a knighthood or damehood during or soon after their tenure.

She was earlier this year slammed by MPs for the series of blunders which led to her leaving the post of DPP.

A report found that she did not spot the 'extent and seriousness' of failures to disclose vital evidence to defence lawyers, a damning report said.

In some instances, the accused were days away from trial when they were told that texts, emails or messages on social media had been uncovered which proved their innocence.

The CPS reviewed 3,637 cases in England and Wales between January and mid-February and identified disclosure failings in 47, all of which were halted.



Alison Saunders (pictured), 57, was forced to stand down as Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) earlier this year after the Government declined to extend her contract



Alison Saunders (pictured), who stepped down as director of public prosecutions, has come under fire over failures to disclose evidence which led to the collapse of numerous rape cases

Liam Allan, 23, was accused of rape spent almost two years on bail ahead of a trial at Croydon Crown Court.

It collapsed in December after messages undermining the case were found, with prosecutors later apologising for their errors in not disclosing them earlier.

A review into the collapsed case found more than 57,000 messages were recovered from the complainant's phone, but only some were served in evidence.

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While Samuel Armstrong, 25, who worked as a senior aide for Conservative MP Craig Mackinlay, was cleared in a trial last year of raping a woman in his boss's Westminster office.

He said that crucial evidence had been disclosed to his defence team just eight working days before the trial at Southwark Crown Court.

A committee of MPs found earlier this year that Saunders 'did not sufficiently recognise the extent and seriousness' of failures in the disclosure process.

The Justice Committee said the correct disclosure of evidence by the police and CPS is too often seen as an 'administrative headache'.

The CPS said in a statement: 'It's fundamentally untrue to suggest the CPS has ever sought convictions at any cost.'

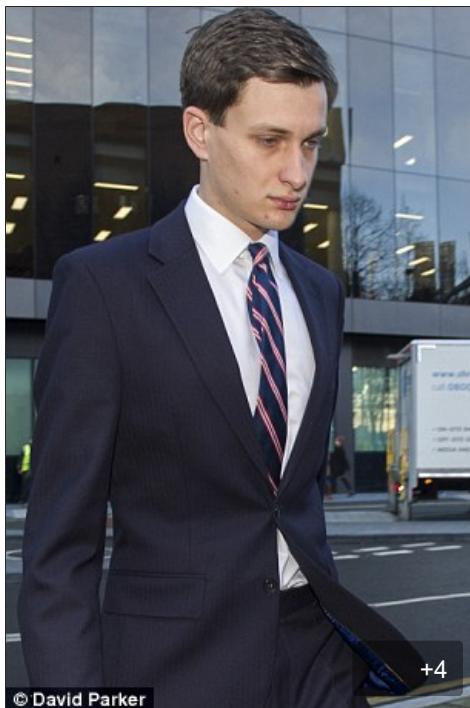
'In fact the conviction rate over the last five years has remained steady despite a more complex caseload and challenging financial climate.'

'The police and CPS apologised to Liam Allan for the investigative and disclosure issues in his case. Samuel Armstrong was acquitted by a jury after trial.'

'We have worked with police to tackle the long-standing and system wide issues around disclosure. Putting this right is our top priority and a comprehensive programme of work is under way to drive lasting improvements.'



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Liam Allan (left) and Samuel Armstrong (right) who were both put on trial accused of crimes they had not committed - urged a break with precedent and slammed Alison Saunders

Mrs Saunders was also forced to apologise after her decision not to prosecute Lord Janner was overturned.

A report by High Court judge Sir Richard Henriques later found police and prosecutors missed three chances to charge Lord Janner over historic sex abuse claims after allegations first surfaced in 1991.

In April 2015 the CPS announced that the peer should not be charged as he was suffering from dementia, but this was overturned by a review two months later.

A judge then ruled that he was unfit to stand trial and instead ordered a 'trial of the facts' to be heard at the Old Bailey. These proceedings were dropped when he died in December 2015.

Collapsing trials and suicide: The blunders on her watch

THE DISCLOSURE CRISIS

In 2014 Mrs Saunders promised to halt the decline in rape convictions.

But four years on, all rape and serious sex assault cases are under review following the collapse of several high-profile prosecutions due to disclosure blunders.

In the lead-up to criminal trials, police and prosecutors have a duty to disclose evidence that might either assist the defence case or undermine the prosecution's case. But in a series of recent cases, evidence has not been handed over.

The crisis unfolded after the rape trial of criminology student Liam Allan, 22, was halted by a judge when it emerged his accuser had sent messages to friends about her rape fantasies. The number of prosecutions that have collapsed due to disclosure errors has soared by 70 per cent in the past two years.

Yet Miss Saunders has insisted there is no one innocent in jail after being wrongly convicted because of mistakes in disclosure.

THE RAPE CLAIM SUICIDE

Eleanor de Freitas, 23, was devastated when the man she accused of sexual assault launched a prosecution against her for allegedly lying.

Terrified at the prospect of intimate details of her personal life being picked over in court, the vulnerable graduate killed herself at her family home in Fulham, West London, in April 2014 – just three days before she was due to face a crown court.

Miss de Freitas had accused wealthy Chelsea financier Alexander Economou, 35, of raping her just before Christmas 2012, but detectives decided not to proceed with the case. Mr Economou then brought a private prosecution against her for perverting justice.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

In 2014, the DPP declared FGM a priority saying: 'We are very keen to make sure that wherever possible we are looking at FGM cases.'

But last month prosecutors failed for the third time to secure Britain's first conviction for the offence as a lawyer was cleared at the Old Bailey of ordering his daughter be cut as punishment.

LORD JANNER

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Mrs Saunders has said it was 'a matter of sincere regret' the allegations were never heard by a jury.

OPERATION ELVEDEN

The £20million probe dubbed the 'biggest witch-hunt against journalists in memory' ended in failure as prosecutors failed to secure a single conviction in the largest investigation in criminal history.

Operation Elveden saw 34 journalists and editors arrested over alleged payments to public officials and 29 were charged.

But their cases were either dropped or they were cleared. Some of those accused had spent years on bail. Press Gazette editor Dominic Ponsford said that it was 'a shameful episode in the history of this country's criminal justice system'. But Mrs Saunders hit back saying: 'I'm not here to make popular decisions.'



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