

SOPHIE HILL

Call 2003

ABOUT ME

Sophie is a highly experienced barrister specialising in family proceedings with a particular emphasis on financial matters and private law children disputes.

She regularly accepts instructions from members of the public via the Direct Access scheme. She is a pupil supervisor.

Sophie's hardworking, clear and approachable manner is appreciated by professional and lay clients in circumstances where there are usually high levels of tension and emotion for them.

EXPERIENCE

Sophie specialised in Family Law following a common law first six pupillage on circuit in family, personal injury and employment and a specialist criminal second six pupillage in London, prosecuting and defending in the Crown Court and Magistrates Court.

With experience of casework for a solicitors' firm whilst at BPP Law School studying for the BVC, Sophie prioritises case management and offers detailed feedback on hearings and next steps to professional and lay clients.

Formerly appointed to the CPS List to prosecute and with a criminal defence practice of defending offences of violence and serious sexual assault including historic allegations against family members she gained extensive experience in cross-examination by conducting trials daily.

Sophie gained a thorough grounding in complex factual analysis from specialising in deception cases, being led in a number of high-value fraud matters including an allegation against an accountant requiring expert evidence, led by Queen's Counsel gaining invaluable skills and experience transferable to complex financial cases.

As a family practitioner Sophie has enjoyed fact-finding hearings over five weeks and lengthy final hearings. In 2012 she gained permission to appeal in the Court of Appeal and went on to instruct Queen's Counsel for the substantive hearing leading to the overturning of the findings on appeal.

PRACTICE AREAS

Sophie deals with divorce and financial remedy matters, including cases in the High Court on jurisdiction. She advises on a wide variety of issues including nullity and financial relief applications under the Children Act 1989.

In private law children cases Sophie has experience of specific issue order matters in relation to education (particularly choice of school), religion, medical procedures including circumcision, and internal and international relocation.

EDUCATION

2001 BA (Hons) Law, University of Cambridge

2002 Benefactors' Scholar and Harmsworth Exhibitioner of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple.

2003 Bar Vocational Course Very Competent (BPP Law School, London)

2005 MA Cantab

Conversational French, Spanish and Italian.

Sophie delivers seminars and training to solicitors

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

FLBA

Association of Lawyers for Children

Middle Temple

CASES

Re M (A Child) [2012] EWCA Civ 1580

Family Finance and Property Cases involving:

An alleged interest in a discretionary trust worth at least £25million, disposition of business assets including equipment and monies, the disqualified director status of the client and his father, interrelated businesses and invoicing, and loss of significant contracts worth in excess of £1.6million each.

Two professionals where one asserted that a mortgage deed had been drawn up between one party and their parents during the marriage, suggesting a genuine debt was owed to parents, which the other alleged was false. The mortgage deed was discovered on a family computer leading to the instruction of a forensic computer expert to establish the creation date of the document from the metadata of the computer file. Subsequently a considerable dispute as to the terms of the letter of instruction led to a directions hearing to resolve the LOI whereupon the client's position prevailed.

The true arrangements of the complex business structure for a large coffee shops franchise and property letting business worth in excess of £21 million, using a round table settlement meeting before FDR.

Issues of undue influence and duress in relation to loss of employment in family businesses, loss of shareholdings, and past 'settlement of claims'.

Representation and advice in cases involving illness and disability including disputes regarding:

The impact of sickle cell anaemia on capacity to work in circumstances where the applicant was receiving treatment but had retrained in flexible work to work from home.

The subdivision and adaptation of the family home and the contribution of the wheelchair user to the family finances by his council grant which would have been repayable upon sale.

Enforcement applications and variation of order applications.

Sharing pensions in the context of terminal illness.

Private Children Law proceedings

Applications for Child Arrangements Orders. Notable cases include:

Representing the father in an application for transfer of residence following unproven allegations of physical and sexual abuse made by the mother to the family court and to the police, resulting in transfer of the two children to his care.

Transfer of residence to father following a dispute lasting over 3 years commencing with a PSO application in respect of travel to Iraq, resulting in a protracted contact dispute and ultimately transfer of residence of the child (aged 10) to the father's care'

Representing the father via Direct Access in a dispute lasting over 3 years commencing with a Specific Issue order relating to a change of school, resulting in a shared care order with primary care to the father. Subsequent applications for enforcement of the order to ensure that the child would be supported by mother in his elite sports training;

Internal and external relocation cases including representing a father in a five-day contested hearing in the High Court where the children were removed from Scotland to London and then to Gibraltar, whereupon Mother alleged domestic violence during contact which was not found as a fact;

Specific issues Orders including representing a mother who was opposed to the circumcision of the child (aged 8) following the father's application for the procedure to be conducted for religious reasons;

Acting on behalf of the mother to obtain a Termination of Parental Responsibility application following a conviction of rape against mother and sexual abuse of the subject child;

On behalf of the National Bar Pro Bono Unit, Sophie represented a convicted Schedule 1 Offender in his application for indirect contact, advising on and applying for an order to release funds for

representation in relation to the mother's applications, including a change of name because of the media coverage of the case and the father's notoriety.