

SAM WATTS

Year called 2018

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OVERVIEW

Sam is a specialist in all areas of Family and Private Client law. He accepts instructions in financial remedy and TOLATA proceedings, the Court of Protection, public and private children law and applications under the Family Law Act 1996.

He has experience as sole counsel up to and including in the High Court and will take a strategic approach from the outset of his involvement to make sure that his clients' best interests are met. He will advise on and encourage a settlement where appropriate but will not hesitate to contest issues on his client's behalf when it would result in a better outcome. His advice is tailored to the client and recognises the diverse circumstances of his client base, which has included politicians, established artists and serving members of the police and armed forces.

PRACTICE AREAS

Public Law Children

Private Law Children

Finance and Private Client

Court of Protection

International Family Law

EXPERIENCE

Financial Remedy, Family Finances and Private Client

Sam is regularly instructed at each stage of the financial remedy process, including pFDRs and multi-day contested final hearings. He is recognised for his measured and constructive approach. He will often be instructed to advise on the merits of a case before proceedings have been issued and to inform alternative forms of dispute resolution. He has a particular interest in TOLATA proceedings and intervenor claims and is happy to advise on the merits of these cases.

He has wide experience in this field of family law, which includes cases involving pre and post matrimonial assets, property overseas and disputes over the applicability of pre or post

nuptial agreements. He has acted in claims brought under Part III MFPA 1984 and for the enforcement of and variation of orders brought under MCA 1973.

His focus is on achieving an appropriate settlement for his client if possible, acknowledging the importance of strategic and tactical negotiation on all issues. Where agreement is impossible or inappropriate, his experience of contested final hearings allows him to confidently conduct the case.

Court of Protection

Sam has an established practice in the Court of Protection. He is well-versed in applications under Section 21A and Section 16 MCA 2016 and will accept instructions to act at any stage of proceedings.

He is regularly instructed to represent protected parties via the Official Solicitor or other litigation friends, and also has significant experience representing local authorities and the family members of vulnerable adults. Sam is particularly interested in cases concerning complex or fluctuating capacity and has acted in cases involving traumatic brain injury and Korsakoff Syndrome.

Private Child

Sam recognises the complex dynamic between separated parents. His focus is on resolving the case as effectively as possible, remaining mindful that any court order will need to work for the years that follow.

He has experience of long-running and intractable disputes about child arrangements or key decisions about a child's welfare. He is often instructed to represent the child's interests in high conflict or complex cases. Sam has also represented parents in cases where one wishes to relocate (within the jurisdiction and abroad), or where one parent has already done so and the child needs to be returned.

Family Law Act 1996

Sam accepts instructions in cases under the Family Law Act 1996, including orders to regulate the occupation of a property or transfer a tenancy between occupants. Sam's involvement in these cases is often in the context of broader litigation and he is well used to advising on how such orders can effect in parallel private child or financial remedy proceedings.

Public Child

Sam is instructed to represent all parties at all stages of public law proceedings. He is able to use this experience to anticipate the strategy and concerns of other parties to his client's advantage. His empathetic approach is valued by vulnerable parents who trust him to promote their needs during a time of extreme anxiety.

Sam is often instructed by Local Authorities. He has significant experience of applications to safeguard children under Part IV Children Act 1989, including contested hearings to remove them from their parent's care. He has a developing practice in complex cases under the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court, including applications for the deprivation of a child's liberty.

PUBLICATIONS AND SEMINARS

Publications

Delaying Departure? Domicile in Divorce Cases (with Greg Williams) – Financial Remedies Journal, March 2026.

Thoughts on Applications to Withdraw Financial Remedy Proceedings (with Adrian Barnett-Thoung Holland) -Financial Remedies Journal, May 2024.

Force Majeure or Reasonable Exuse: Child Arrangements Orders and COVID 19 – Family Law Week, May 2020

Lectures, Seminars and Training

Sam regularly delivers lectures, seminars and training for solicitors and other professionals. Topics have included the enforcement of orders for financial remedies, applications under the Thwaite jurisdiction, best practice in relation to drug and alcohol testing, and consensual adoption.

Together with Srishti Suresh, he co-led a seminar series for LawWorks on the proper approach to case managing domestic abuse and parental alienation cases. This remains a training tool for pro bono clinics nationwide.

Sam originally studied philosophy at the University of Bristol, with a particular interest in phenomenology, the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of psychology. He then completed the Graduate Diploma in Law (Commendation), simultaneously teaching Issues in International Criminal Law as a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Bedfordshire, before completing the Bar Professional Training Course (Outstanding).

Before coming to the Bar, Sam spent time in the legal office of the UN World Food Programme, dealing with contractual, constitutional and international law matters at their headquarters in Rome. Sam has also worked at the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, where he assisted in the investigation of possible institutional failings to protect children from sexual abuse within the Anglican Church and Roman Catholic Church.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Eductation

Bar Professional Training Course (BPP University Law School)

Graduate Diploma in Law (BPP University Law School)

BA (Hons) Philosophy (University of Bristol)

Professional Memberships

The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple

Family Law Bar Association

Association of Lawyers for Children

REPORTED CASES

[Ramana v Kist Ramana \[2026\] 1 FLR 241; \[2025\] EWCA Civ 1022; \[2025\] 4 WLR 120; \[2025\] WLR\(D\) 425](#)

(PDF report provided by ICLR and reproduced with kind permission)

Court of Appeal case on domicile and the jurisdiction for divorce in England & Wales. The Wife successfully appealed a decision of the High Court that it had no jurisdiction to hear her divorce petition given that she had not intended to abandon her domicile of choice following her (temporary) relocation abroad. Now the leading authority on the burden of proof in domicile case and the proper approach to contingencies on which intention can be based.

AWARDS

Award for academic achievement on the Bar Professional Training Course (2018), Inner Temple
Major Scholarship (2017), Inner Temple

Advocacy Scholarship (2017)), BPP University Law School

TESTIMONIALS

“Sam is always faultlessly prepared and his advocacy is always clear and persuasive. Sam’s ability to grasp complex legal issues guarantees that he can provide invaluable and well-reasoned advice to clients and solicitors alike.

Sam is very much appeaseable to all types of clients, is exceptionally easy to deal with and incredibly knowledgeable. He is a dependable advocate who is willing to fight for his clients but who also takes a realistic view.

*Sam is remarkably hard-working, is supremely intelligent and has an ability to lay out complex issues in simple terms. Judges listen to his persuasive and commanding style despite his junior years.” – **Partner, Legal 500 ranked firm.***

*“Sam went above and beyond in the case I had with him. He was happy to help with any query, and never felt as though he did not have time for you. He was fantastic with the client – clearly explaining advice, as many times as needed, understanding that this was a highly emotive case for them. Myself and the client felt fully supported by Sam and I shall definitely be working with him again” – **Instructing Solicitor, Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners ranked firm.***

“I started to instruct Sam when he was still a pupil barrister. What struck me immediately was how knowledgeable and well prepared he was when I first instructed him. I immediately sensed his passion to achieve desired outcomes for his clients.

“Sam is very approachable and always prepared to assist his instructing solicitors. I really appreciate how robust and determined he is. What I like about working with Sam is that we always work as a team. He communicates with me regularly throughout a case in order to achieve the best legal strategy for the case at hand. This almost always leads to successful outcomes.

Sam goes the extra mile when representing his clients in order to meet their specific needs. I have instructed him to represent vulnerable clients and his approach to them was invaluable and made the difference in their cases.

*It is an absolute pleasure to work with Sam and I am absolutely confident that he will get far in his career.” – **Instructing Solicitor, Legal 500 ranked firm.***

*“The service I received from Mr Watts was simply outstanding. I would also like to commend Mr Watts for being very understanding and sensitive to my racial/ cultural experiences which greatly helped communications. I do believe it is in the best interests of the child to have two parents in their life as well as their siblings/wider family. This outcome was a tremendous relief.” – **Lay client .***