



## John Vater QC, MCI Arb

Called: 1995

Silk Date: 2012



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## Practice Profile

### Profile

John is a leading barrister in the field of children's law. Having graduated from Oxford University (where he was a Scholar), John was called to the Bar in 1995 by Gray's Inn (where he was Lord Justice Holker Scholar). He has been a member of Harcourt Chambers from pupillage, after which he quickly established a busy children's law practice across London and the South East.

John took Silk in 2012 and has continued to appear nationally in the most complex and sensitive children's cases.

John has been public access trained by the Bar Council and is willing to accept instructions direct from members of the public in appropriate cases.

### Public Law:

John's expertise in the most complex and serious public law cases is well recognised. He is particularly well known for his skill in cross-examining and deploying highly technical expert evidence. In the past year he has appeared across the country in cases involving allegations of organized multi-generational sexual abuse, enclosed head injuries (so called 'shaken baby' cases), so-called factitious or induced illness, multiple fractures and the whole range of cases involving the alleged serious abuse of children. In those cases he has succeeded in arguing for the dismissal of care proceedings in several cases contrary to the weight of the written expert opinion (see for example *Re E* [2015] EWFC B119). In the past year John has appeared in these cases for Local Authorities, parents and Guardians. The profession recognised John's continuing contribution to the field of public law children's law when he was shortlisted as the Jordan's Family Law QC of the Year.

### Private Law:

John has a particular expertise in the most sensitive and intractable private law cases, in which he continues to appear for people from all walks of life, including high profile individuals where media interest is high. John is happy to advise in private law cases before the issue of proceedings, where 'neutral evaluation' or another collaborative approach may result in agreement before any litigation is launched.

John has given papers in the law relating to artificial reproduction and surrogacy, and has experience of cases involving so-called 'non-traditional' families and relationships. For example, he appeared for the father (donor) in the case of *JB v KS* [2015] EWHC 180, a leading case relating to the status of pre-birth agreements where sperm is donated.

### International Cases:



John appeared in the leading case of *Malik (Re M [2015] EWHC 1433)* in which the President defined the proper procedure to be followed where Orders in Wardship are sought to prevent children from travelling to warzones. The case highlights the proper scope of wardship in such cases, as well as the use of Anti-Tipping Off and Reporting Restriction Orders in the family jurisdiction. Also before the President, John appeared in the leading case of *Re S and T [2015] EWHC 1753*, in the field of international adoption.

**Media Law:**

Many of John's cases attract media interest and in the last year he has worked closely with the media in a number of cases. He has applied for both Reporting Restriction Orders and Anti-Tipping Off Orders ( e.g., *Re M [2015] EWHC 1433*) He is familiar with the need to protect not only children at the centre of high profile litigation, but also the reputations of adults involved. He is comfortable advising in relation to reputation management and the tort of 'misuse of private information'.

**Endorsements:**

John has been recognised as a leader at the Bar by Chambers and Partners and the Legal 500 for over a decade. In 2015 he was shortlisted as Family Law QC of the Year by Jordan's Family Law.

"Funny, relaxed and preternaturally confident, he is a fearless advocate who is hyper-articulate. He has a broad experience of all work involving children and is dedicated to achieving justice in the most difficult and complex public law cases." "John has a good knowledge of the medical science that underpins the law in his area and is an effective cross-examiner." Chambers UK Bar 2020 London

"He's an exceptional silk with a real enthusiasm for the law and fearless representation of his client, whoever they are." "He's a fearless advocate in the finest and most ancient traditions of the practice, and has broad experience of all work involving children. He's dedicated to achieving justice even in the most difficult and complex public law cases." Chambers UK Bar 2019 South Eastern

"He is incredibly strong as an advocate, and is highly insightful and extremely resilient." "An exceptional silk with a real enthusiasm for the law and fearless representation of his client." Chambers UK Bar 2020 Midlands

A public law specialist known for his expertise in medical cases containing extensive expert evidence. Vater is particularly proficient in cases involving non-accidental injury to young children. He is commended for his technical knowledge and skill at cross-examination. "A ferocious advocate who absolutely fights his client's corner. One of his great skills is his forensic cross-examination of expert evidence." Chambers UK Bar 2019 London

Focusing on public children law matters, Vater is particularly adept at handling sensitive cases containing complex medical evidence. He is skilled at representing local authorities and parents in cases concerning relocation and surrogacy, while also taking on private international adoption work. "His advocacy is excellent and his strategy is second to none." "He thinks through his cases very carefully and puts enormous effort into his work." "Very personable." Chambers UK Bar 2019 South Eastern

An impressive advocate who specialises in the field of children law. He undertakes the most serious care cases such as those involving allegations of serious injury and murder. He is particularly known for representing local authorities and parents in cases with complex medical evidence. He also handles sensitive and complex private children law matters.

"An exceptionally capable silk." "He thinks through his cases very carefully and puts enormous effort into his work." Chambers UK Bar 2019 Midlands

"A real trooper: he has guts and will fight for his clients." Legal 500 UK Bar 2019

"A class act." Legal 500 UK Bar 2018



'A public law specialist known for his expertise in medical cases containing extensive expert evidence. He is commended for his technical knowledge and skill at cross-examination.' Chambers UK Bar 2018 London

"Very bright and takes a straightforward, down-to-earth approach with clients." Chambers UK Bar 2018 London

'Focusing on public children law matters, Vater is particularly adept at handling sensitive cases containing complex medical evidence. He is skilled at representing local authorities and parents in cases concerning relocation and surrogacy, while also taking on private international adoption work.' Chambers UK Bar 2018 South Eastern

"Very bright, down to earth and reassuring for clients." Chambers UK Bar 2018 South Eastern

'An impressive advocate who specialises in the field of children law. He undertakes the most serious care cases such as those involving allegations of serious injury and murder. He also handles sensitive and complex private children law matters.' Chambers UK Bar 2018 Midlands

"Incredibly committed, phenomenally bright and truly tenacious." "I never cease to be amazed at what he does; his knowledge is absolutely phenomenal." Chambers UK Bar 2018 Midlands

'He is fearless and committed to the cases he presents in court.' Legal 500 UK Bar 2017

'A public law specialist known for his expertise in medical cases containing extensive expert evidence. He is commended for his technical knowledge and skill at cross-examination.' Chambers UK Bar 2017 London

"An all-round excellent character who impresses clients with his advocacy and negotiating skills. He is one of the best public children law parents' advocates in the country." Chambers UK Bar 2017 London

'Focusing on public children law matters, Vater is particularly adept at handling sensitive cases containing complex medical evidence. He is skilled at representing local authorities and parents in cases concerning relocation and surrogacy, while also taking on private international adoption work.' Chambers UK Bar 2017 South Eastern

Strengths: "He has wonderful in-depth knowledge of medical issues, he is exceptionally well prepared, and fights his client's corner." "He's a fearsome and superb advocate." Chambers UK Bar 2017 South Eastern

'A children law silk who takes no prisoners.' Legal 500 UK Bar 2016

'One of the most gifted cross - examiners you will see in a courtroom...' Chambers UK Bar South Eastern

'He is your man when the chips are down...' Chambers UK Bar South Eastern

#### Publications and Lectures:

John is co-author of 2 practitioner text-books; 'Contact: The New Deal' (Jordan's) and 'The Public Law Outline: a Case Management Compendium' (Jordan's). He has written and given numerous papers over the years, spanning surrogacy and artificial reproduction, media law, inflicted head injuries and the role of experts, high conflict private law cases and 'alienation'. He has been an invited speaker for the Jersey Law Society, the Association of Lawyers for Children, and numerous regional organisations.

#### Recent Reported Cases:

In the last year John has appeared in numerous cases in the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. A complete list of John's reported cases is available upon request.



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*Re D (A Child)* [2017] EWHC 3075 (Fam)

- *Re N (Children)* [2016] UKSC 16
- *Re B (Child) (Relocation: Sweden)* [2015] EWCA Civ 286
- *JB v KS* [2015] EWHC 180 (Fam)
- *Re S and T* [2015] EWHC 1753 (Fam)
- *Re M* [2015] EWHC 1433 (Fam)

Professional Memberships:

John is a member of Gray's Inn, the Midland Circuit, the Family Law Bar Association and the Association of Lawyers for Children.

Personal:

John is married with one child. He is a Trustee of The Oxford Parent Infant Project (OXPIP).