

Chambers UK Bar 2021

FULL Rankings Summary

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LONDON BAR

FAMILY/MATRIMONIAL - FAMILY: CHILDREN - Band 2

Members at Harcourt Chambers offer a full family law service, but are especially adroit in assisting a range of clients with all manner of children's law proceedings, garnering particular praise for their expertise in international abduction and relocation cases. They are known for their expert representation of local authorities, parents, and guardians in complex public law cases, a number of which relate to abuse, non-accidental injury and child death. While such cases form a large part of the set's work, a number of individuals are on hand to also undertake divorce and financial remedy proceedings.

[Nick Goodwin QC - Band 2](#)

A barrister with a caseload that includes public law children cases, in which he appears on behalf of parents, guardians and the local authority. His practice covers international leave to remove and serial sexual abuse matters, and he has experience with cases involving unusual religious aspects. He has further experience handling divorce proceedings and sits regularly as a deputy High Court judge.

Strengths: "Suave and dangerously effective in court." "He is silver-tongued, persuasive, and someone who can argue very difficult cases."

Recent work: Acted as amicus curiae on behalf of the Attorney General in Attorney General v Akhter and Khan. These ground-breaking proceedings aimed to determine whether or not an Islamic religious marriage could be annulled under principles of human rights.

[John Vater QC - Band 2](#)

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.

Strengths: "Down to earth, honest and empathetic." "He can get you out of a pickle and clients love him for it."

[Edward Devereux QC - Band 2](#)

A leading expert in the international movement of children, particularly through abduction. He has been involved in landmark cases that have shaped the country's laws and appeared in the most complex cases in the Court of Appeal and the ECJ. Devereux has particular expertise in child abduction matters which attract significant media attention.

Strengths: "One of the heavyweights of family law, he is a phenomenal advocate and terrifying to the other side when he cross-examines." "He absolutely demolishes the experts and can turn cases on their head. Edward is incredibly talented and has a phenomenal repertoire of reported

cases."

Recent work: Instructed by an applicant father who had found out that his eight-year-old son was actually the biological son of a man whom his wife had had an extra-marital affair with. The client wanted his wife to disclose the identity of the man and made a successful tort of deceit claim.

[Jonathan Sampson QC – New Silks](#)

Called to the Bar in 1997, he has extensive family law experience under his belt. Sampson handles a wide range of cases including both public and private law children matters. His public law practice sees him handling matters relating to child death and serious abuse.

Strengths: "Jonathan has an encyclopedic memory of regulations and the law. He is favoured for complex cases and consistently delivers results." "Once you put him on a case the client only wants him. He is a polished performer in court and an excellent strategist."

[Mehvish Chaudhry – Band 2](#)

Junior family barrister renowned for her expertise in international child movement, who regularly appears in the High Court. She possesses a wealth of knowledge of child abduction and leave to remove cases with jurisdictional complications.

Strengths: "Fantastically helpful at dealing with complex applications." "Down to earth and easy to work with." "Hard-working and fearless, with a fantastic knowledge of international law."

[Edward Bennett – Band 4](#)

Well-reputed junior with experience beyond his call of international children law cases. His practice has taken him to the High Court and Court of Appeal. Sources are quick to highlight his impressive intellect and expertise.

Strengths: "Has gravitas way beyond his years and knows his stuff inside out. He is an erudite, likeable and charming advocate." "His legal analysis, arguments, and knowledge of international children's law are consistently impressive."

Recent work: Represented the father in *Bird v Leatherland*, an unusual case which involved a dispute between a mother and father over who had the right to organise the burial of their child, who had been dead for 20 months. The case was hugely complex because the mother had been found guilty of murder and the father was not on the birth certificate.

[Rob George – Band 4](#)

Legal academic and barrister who is recognised for his particular expertise in international family law issues, such as child abduction and relocation, as well as jurisdiction disputes. His work in children's cases has taken him to the Supreme Court.

Strengths: "A knowledgeable, razor-sharp and talented advocate." "A walking encyclopedia of the law relating to international relocation, and brilliant on technical points of law."

Recent work: Acted in *Re NY (Abduction: Inherent Jurisdiction)*, appearing for the appellant in a ground-breaking Supreme Court appeal about the scope of child abduction law, and the availability of the High Court's Inherent Jurisdiction in relation to children in such cases.

SOUTH EASTERN BAR

[Nick Goodwin QC – Band 2](#)

An extremely experienced silk who regularly handles public and private children law proceedings. He is highly regarded for his participation in

cases concerning fabricated or induced illness allegations, non-accidental injury and infant fatalities, while also advising adopters and local authorities in international adoption cases.

Strengths: "His attention to detail is second to none - nothing escapes him."

[John Vater QC – Band 1](#)

Focusing on public children law matters, Vater is particularly adept at handling sensitive cases containing complex medical evidence. He often acts on complex matters involving child abuse, as well as non-accidental injuries and infant fatalities. He is skilled at representing local authorities and parents in cases concerning relocation and surrogacy, while also taking on private international adoption work.

Strengths: "Vater is the most sought-after barrister in his speciality: public children work. If you want someone to deal with a serious public law case, you would be looking at him."

[Aidan Vine QC – Band 2](#)

A distinguished advocate who is experienced in matrimonial finance and children cases, including many with international complexities. He has appeared with regularity in the High Court and Court of Appeal, and also lectures and publishes on family law matters. He often handles care proceedings, including those involving abuse and neglect.

Strengths: "He is very approachable, with an extremely good sense of client care, and he gives clear, unequivocal advice." "He is a class act."

[Jonathan Sampson QC – New Silks](#)

New silk who maintains a vibrant public and private family law practice that includes high net worth finance cases involving significant trust and business assets. He is particularly adept at handling cases relating to children and vulnerable adults, such as international relocation cases and care proceedings involving domestic and sexual abuse allegations. He undertakes a significant volume of appellate advocacy and has appeared in the Court of Appeal on numerous occasions.

Strengths: "He is brilliant at strategy." "Very detailed, thorough and good on his feet."

MIDLANDS BAR

[John Vater QC – Band 1](#)

"It is always strategic to instruct him. He's brilliant at cross-examination, extremely shrewd and smart. He listens and knows what judges are looking for." "A superb fighter who is passionate about his work and delivers a superb job for his clients." "Incredibly hard-working and gets straight to the heart of things. He improves the lives of his clients."

LONDON BAR

FAMILY: MATRIMONIAL FINANCE

[Fiona Hay - Band 4](#)

An experienced matrimonial finance practitioner who is particularly noted for her work in cases concerning pension complications. Her practice also boasts a strong international element, particularly as regards Part III proceedings. She has been a Recorder on the Midlands Circuit since 2009.

Strengths: "An elegant advocate who is an expert in domestic and international pensions in regards to divorce." "She delivers difficult news with real compassion, and is both responsive and hugely bright." "Fiona has a lovely manner with clients and makes them feel helped and reassured."

[Michael Gleeson - Band 4](#)

Expert handler of TOLATA claims and Schedule 1 children proceedings. He is typically sought out by high net worth clients caught up in highly acrimonious cohabitation and maintenance disputes, as well as freezing orders. He has appeared in the Central Family Court and speaks Spanish, Catalan and French.

Strengths: "He adapts to every client you put in front of him and he unpicks problems forensically. His technical knowledge is brilliant and his manner is great." "Especially good when packaging highly complicated trust concepts." "One of the few barristers who is a recognised expert in chancery claims under TOLATA and family proceedings."

FAMILY/MATRIMONIAL – SOUTH EASTERN – Band 1

Harcourt Chambers is a standout set with operations in London and Oxford, which has long held sway as the leader on the South Eastern Circuit for an array of family and matrimonial cases. Its pre-eminent members are instructed in all aspects of family law, being able to tackle everything from high net worth financial remedy issues to complex care and adoption proceedings, as well as cases involving serious criminal charges.

SOUTH EASTERN BAR

FAMILY: MATRIMONIAL FINANCE

[Fiona Hay – Band 1](#)

Senior junior who is esteemed for her expertise in financial relief and particularly sought after for her knowledge of cases involving shareholdings and pensions. She has published a popular handbook on the subject. In addition to appearing as an advocate, she sits as a deputy High Court judge and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

Strengths: "She is settlement-focused and practical. She delivers difficult news with real compassion." "She provides clear advice and strategy." "She is a pensions guru with a lovely manner - she makes clients feel reassured and helped."

[Jane Campbell – Band 2](#)

Widely respected for her expertise in financial remedy and Children Act proceedings, she has also been appointed to sit as a deputy district judge. She attracts a broad range of clients, including high net worth and high-profile individuals. She regularly handles proceedings involving inherited wealth and overseas assets.

Strengths: "She has a remarkable skill in building a rapport with clients."

[Louise Potter – Band 2](#)

Noted for her ability to resolve high-value financial disputes through both litigation and out-of-court negotiation. She offers particular experience in cases involving pensions and business assets.

Strengths: "She is incredibly personable and on point. Clients love her."

[Douglas Allen – Band 3](#)

A junior with extensive experience in a broad array of family law matters who enters the rankings backed by impressive market feedback. He is particularly well regarded for his ability to handle complex divorce proceedings and financial remedy work.

Strengths: "Douglas Allen stands out for his tenacious advocacy." "He brings real clarity to the case." "He is very measured and approachable. He has the judge's ear."

[Emily Rayner – Band 3](#)

Notable matrimonial finance practice complemented by additional strength in cross-border children matters. Her work includes representing parties in divorce proceedings where multimillion-pound businesses and high-value properties are at stake.

Strengths: "She is good at analysing and digesting instructions, has a good empathetic manner with clients and is able to present her argument in court."

ALL CIRCUITS

Ecclesiastical Law

[June Rodgers – Band 1](#)

Eminent practitioner whose ecclesiastical practice spans a wide range of matters including adaptations to church buildings, disciplinary proceedings and the sale of church treasures. She is Chancellor of the Diocese of Gloucester and Deputy Chancellor of the Diocese of London.

Strengths: "A straight-talking barrister who is very skilled."

Recent work: Handled the case of Re SS Philip and James Leckhampton. Sitting as Diocesan Chancellor in the consistory court, she granted a faculty for reordering much to the chagrin of The Victorian Society.