



Justine Ramsden

Call: 2010

Justine joined Harcourt in 2011 following successful completion of pupillage. She is a committed family law specialist, with a primary focus on public and private law children cases.

Justine is passionate about her work and is tireless in her pursuit of the best outcome for every client she represents.

She takes a hands on approach, working closely with her professional client throughout the proceedings, providing strategic advice and ongoing support. Justine is known for establishing strong and trusting relationships with her solicitors.

For Justine, preparation is key. She is forensic in her approach to cases, meticulously combing through the evidence, leaving no stone unturned.

Justine treats every client as an individual. She takes the time to listen, so she understands what is most important to them in their case. This helps her gain their trust so she can give realistic and practical advice about the best way forward.

She is chosen for her ability to work with vulnerable clients, including those with learning disabilities and mental health diagnoses who require an intermediary or lay advocate, and victims of domestic abuse. She ensures they are given the necessary support and protection to enable them to fully participate in the proceedings.

Outside of work Justine enjoys swimming at the local lido, singing and making papercut cards.

Public Law Children

Justine is frequently instructed on behalf of parents, local authorities, children's guardians, extended family members and interveners. She also regularly represents children who have separated from their children's guardian. Her diverse public law practice has given her a deep understanding of how the other parties' may approach a case, putting her in a strong

London

2 Harcourt Buildings, Temple, London, EC4Y 9DB
T: +44 (0)20 7242 355
e: clerks@harcourtchambers.co.uk
DX: DX 373 LDE

Oxford

Churchill House, 3 St Aldate's Courtyard, 38 St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1BN
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e: clerks@harcourtchambers.co.uk
DX: DX 96453 Oxford 4

position to fight her client's case.

Justine appears in cases involving allegations of non-accidental injuries, suspected fabricated or induced illness (FII), mental health issues, domestic abuse, physical abuse, drug and alcohol addiction (including cases in the Family Drug and Alcohol Court), longstanding neglect and emotional harm.

She is frequently instructed to represent parents facing the prospect of their children being adopted. She has a proven record of successfully persuading the court at final hearing to place children with their parents or family members, in cases where she has shown that the local authority has not properly considered the package of support that could be put in place to keep the child within its birth family.

Justine is regularly instructed by local authorities and on behalf of young people in Deprivation of Liberty order applications and Secure Accommodation Order applications.

Justine has also acted as junior counsel in a case involving serious injury and death of a child, and in a complex case concerning historic sexual abuse allegations.

Justine provides local authorities with written advice and oral advice in conference, including designation issues, strategy / case management, schedules of findings and consideration as to whether a child should give evidence (Re W hearings).

Justine is compassionate and empathetic. It is very important to her that her clients feel heard and that they fully understand what is happening at court. She ensures her clients are well supported when at court, both during the hearing and outside of court. Justine works with some of the most vulnerable clients, tailoring support to their individual needs and ensuring their interests are protected. She represents parents with learning disabilities and mental health issues, including those who lack litigation capacity and are represented by the Official Solicitor.

Having recently returned to work following maternity leave, Justine is acutely aware of the importance of keeping mothers with their newborn babies wherever possible. She ensures all other realistic options have been thoroughly considered, including creative safeguarding solutions, before a court orders separation.

“Justine has a great combination of intellect, attention to detail and persistence, with a practical and focused approach. Her style of working with professionals is extremely collaborative with a thorough and detailed approach. She is also effortlessly able to relate to lay clients and resolve their legal issues effectively and sensitively. Above all, Justine is approachable, responsive and calm under pressure, always an absolute pleasure to work with.” – solicitor

Notable Public Law Children cases

- **Re B (A Child) (Post-Adoption Contact) [2019] EWCA Civ 29**

In November 2018, Justine appeared in the first case to reach the Court of Appeal following the implementation of s51A of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. She undertook the case Pro Bono, representing the interests of the prospective adopters and successfully defended the birth parents appeal against the court's refusal to make an order for post-adoption contact.

Private Law Children

Justine has a strong private law children practice and has represented parents, children through their rule 16.4 court appointed guardians as well as other family members.

She likes to provide continuity to her clients, advising them in conference prior to the first hearing and offering advice and support between hearings as required.

Justine appreciates the need to consider the wider issues in these cases and the importance of establishing exactly what the client seeks to achieve and understanding the case from their perspective.

Justine is conscientious and has a keen eye for detail. She is diligent in her preparation, always making sure she carefully considers all the evidence available, identifying any gaps and inconsistencies. This enables her to give robust advice on what further evidence is required to support a client's case as well as assisting her in challenging any Cafcass section 7 report recommendations.

When no contact has been recommended by Cafcass in the safeguarding letter as a result of domestic abuse, violence or sexual offending being raised, Justine carefully considers whether the Cafcass Domestic Abuse Practice Policy has been properly applied, taking into account all the evidence available, and exploring whether there is a way forward to address any safeguarding concerns.

Justine has much experience representing clients in contested interim contact hearings, fact-finding hearings and final hearings, including those concerning sexual abuse, domestic abuse and alienating behaviours.

In one case Justine represented a father where a joint 'lives with' arrangement had broken down and the mother stopped all contact between the child and the father. After a very difficult fact finding hearing, the court made significant findings against the mother in relation to her alienating behaviours and the damaging impact these were having on the child's mental wellbeing. Justine persuaded the court that the only way of securing the child's emotional safety was a transfer of residence. The outcome was that the court made an order for the child to move to live with the father with very limited supervised contact with the mother.

Where it seems possible to reach an agreement without a contested hearing, Justine is a tough negotiator who always fights her client's corner. She is a great problem solver who is able to devise creative solutions to address any safeguarding concerns raised.

"Justine is a very personable, engaging and open individual who put us at ease straight away whilst instilling confidence in us in her ability to represent us very professionally. She demonstrates a genuine personal warmth and interest in her clients which is allied with a great degree of steel when negotiating on their behalf. We felt that Justine was personally involved with us, and invested in us, and she was clearly delighted with the smiles on our faces at the result she had achieved for us. We could not recommend her more highly." – Client

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Domestic Abuse Injunctions

Applications made under the Family Law Act 1996 for non-molestation orders and occupation orders are a key part of Justine's practice, including those linked to concurrent (or imminent) Children Act 1989 proceedings.

Justine has experience in ex parte, return and final hearings. She is confident at representing parties at short notice, when the evidence available is often limited or incomplete.

Justine recognises that these cases are often highly distressing for the clients, whether they are seeking the protection of the court or challenging the allegations made against them.

In cases where she is representing victims of domestic abuse and her clients are frightened, Justine argues robustly on their behalf, determined to do all she can to ensure their safety.

Justine is fully aware of the participation directions available to victims of domestic abuse so they can have protections in place to enable them to fully participate in proceedings and give good quality evidence. This includes working with IDVAs and ISVAs supporting clients at court.

Publications

- ['Justine Ramsden looks at the Cafcass Domestic Abuse Practice Policy in her latest article'](#) – Blog April 2025
- ['Justine Ramsden and Ben Woolstencroft talk about the Cafcass domestic abuse practice policy'](#) – Blog March 2025
- Article for Lexis Nexis on Post-adoption contact under section 51A of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (1 April 2019)

Memberships

- Family Law Bar Association
- Lincoln's Inn

Education

- Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice (Bar) (Outstanding), College of Law, London (2010)
- Graduate Diploma in Law (Distinction), College of Law, London (2009)
- MA in Philosophy, Politics & Economics, Worcester College, University of Oxford (2008)

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Prizes

- Buchanan Prize (2010)
- Wolfson Scholarship (2010)
- Sarah Wadham Bursary (2009)
- Sir Thomas More Bursary (2009)
- Hardwicke Entrance Scholarship (2008)

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