DEANS COURT CHAMBERS

Hannah Whelan

2010 Lincoln's Inn, familyclerks@deanscourt.co.uk

Education	Professional Associations	Appointments
LL.B (Hons) University of Liverpool 2008 Bar Vocational Course: Nottingham Law School (Very Competent) 2010	Lincoln's Inn Northern Circuit FLBA	Circuit Junior of the Midland Circuit 2016-2017

Areas of Specialism

- Family
- Children (Public)
- Children (Private)

Profile

Hannah is a busy and experienced family law practitioner, specialising in both public and private law children matters.

She joined Deans Court Chambers in 2021, relocating home to the North West from the Midland Circuit. Prior to specialising in family law (2017), Hannah was a criminal practitioner and a Grade 2 Prosecutor. As such she is a seasoned, fierce and determined trial advocate, comfortable cross examining experts, professional witnesses and lay witnesses alike. Outside the court room, she is well regarded for her pragmatic and approachable demeanour with both clients and professionals.

She regularly appears at all levels of the Single Family Court at all stages of proceedings in complex matters involving suspected non-accidental injuries, sexual allegations, and matters involving an international element. In particular, she has delivered training on post-Brexit application of The Hague Convention 1996. Hannah is well known to go the extra mile for her clients, quite literally; accepting instructions across the Northern Circuit and beyond, even travelling to the Falkland Islands (a British Overseas Territory) to represent a parent in public law proceedings.

Hannah is also accredited to cross-examine children and vulnerable adults, having successfully completed the FLBA's 'Advocacy and the Vulnerable' training programme. She is able to adjust her working methods, speech and tone in order to relate to a client and ensure their understanding of complex legal matters and phraseology.

Public Children Law

Hannah accepts instructions from local authorities, parents, intervenors and on behalf of children in care proceedings involving issues such as suspected non-accidental injuries, domestic and sexual abuse, drug and alcohol misuse and neglect. In particular, Hannah has been instructed both in her own right and as led junior counsel on cases involving suspected inflicted brain injuries and fractures in babies and young children.

Private Law Children

In private law matters, Hannah is often instructed in complex contact and residence disputes (Child Arrangements Orders) under the Children Act 1989, and Family Law Act 1996 applications. She is well able to deal with allegations of domestic, sexual and financial abuse, alienating behaviours (unexplained reluctance, refusal and/or resistance) and relocation cases. Hannah frequently represents children in private law proceedings instructed through their rule 16.4 Guardian.

Notable Cases

A & Others (Care Orders at home) [2025] EWCA Civ 901

Practice Area:

https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2025/901.html

Hannah represented the children throughout proceedings to final hearing, and thereafter was led by Julia Cheetham KC in the Court of Appeal where Baker LJ referred to this as a 'very challenging case'. The matter involved issues of technical procedure relating to children placed at home on care orders versus the welfare interests of the children in being removed from the care of a parent where the local authority alleged a failure to comply with the home placement agreement.

Mother v Father [2025] EWFC 420 (B)

Practice Area:

https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWFC/OJ/2025/420.html

Hannah represented a mother in protracted private law proceedings involving allegations of sexual abuse of the child and successfully defending allegations of alienating behaviours; securing a lives with order to the mother.

A Local Authority v B

Practice Area: Public law

Represented a father accused of deliberately suffocating a baby (junior counsel). Successfully challenged the complex medical evidence requiring cross examination of court appointed paediatrician and treating clinicians who disagreed with each other. Client had significant emotional and cognitive difficulties presenting in emotional outbursts and violent behaviours. He could not maintain professional relationships nor give evidence in his own defence. Psychiatrist Mal Chambers stated in evidence it was testament to Hannah's skills as a barrister that she was able to take instructions and represent him, in circumstances where he would not tolerate support, assessment, questions/challenge and court conditions.

A Local Authority v H

Practice Area: Public law

Represented a neurodivergent mother, negatively assessed to care for her child resulting in an adoptive care plan. Hannah identified the local authority that had not made reasonable adjustments in their assessment in breach of their duties and primary legislation. Hannah successfully argued for an independent social work assessment to ensure a fair process. At the final hearing, the court was persuaded to endorse a care plan of post-adoption contact in light of changing attitudes and reflecting the particulars of this case/mother, rather than societal norm and usual practice. Hannah was praised in the judgment for her efforts in the case and support for the client.

A Local Authority v A

Practice Area: Public law

Represented a mother against allegations of so-called honour-based abuse from a child who had been groomed by a third party resulting in false allegations against the family (junior counsel). This was a complex and emotionally charged matter in which the child was separately represented.

Re A&B

Practice Area: Public law

Represented a 17 year old intervenor against allegations they were responsible for significant head injuries and fractures to an 8 week old baby. This involved supporting the client throughout a hybrid hearing from chambers, including during their oral evidence and in explaining the complex medical evidence.

https://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWFC/HCJ/2020/104.html&query=(.2020.)+AND+(EWFC)+AND+(104)

W v W

Practice Area: Private law

Represented a father in private law proceedings where mother made over 20 allegations of sexual, physical, emotional

abuse and coercive controlling behaviour, resulting in no contact between father and his children for over 12 months. Mother had additional needs and required intermediary support, meaning Hannah's cross examination was sensitive and responsive to her needs, while being extensive and detailed to meet the facts of the case. Limited findings were made against the father following a 5 day final hearing with cross findings made against the mother, and contact was reinstated following the hearing.

B v E

Practice Area: Private law

Represented a mother in private law proceedings alleging her children had been influenced by her ex-husband. A complex family dispute resulted in two children living in different homes, refusing contact to the other parent and being exposed to emotional harm in protracted proceedings involving children's services and CAMHS interventions over a number of years. Findings made that father had caused the child harm by refusing treatment and had contributed to the breakdown in the relationship between mother and daughter.

What the Directories say

'Hannah is very approachable and a pleasure to work with. She is able to assimilate a great deal of information and her cross-examination is incredibly skilfull.'

Legal 500, 2026

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