

# Liz Adams

**Year of Call:** 2021

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## Overview

Elizabeth Adams (Liz) is an Education and Family law barrister. She accepts instructions across all areas of family law, including financial remedies/TOLATA, public and private children law, and domestic abuse injunctions. Liz frequently appears on behalf of both parents, young people, and local authorities in the First Tier Tribunal for Special Educational Needs and Disability matters, with a particular interest in disputes around Education, Health and Care Plans.

Liz understands that Family and Education law matters are highly stressful for clients, with very high stakes and often with years' worth of background events leading up to court applications. Liz's calm and empathetic approach puts clients at ease and Liz prioritises making sure that her clients feel heard and understood. Liz is experienced with the Advocate's Gateway Toolkits and has experience with representing and cross-examining vulnerable witnesses. Liz is experienced in matters where multiple health and social care professionals are involved, matters involving complex and/or co-morbid mental health and neurodiverse conditions, and matters involving alcohol and/or substance abuse.

Liz has a specialist interest in matters involving disability, neurodiversity, and/or special educational needs. Liz previously delivered pro bono legal advice with IPSEA, a charity that assists parents of children with additional needs with securing educational support. Liz's experience in SEN, neurodiversity and disability in both Family and Education law greatly assist in matters where these issues cross over, such as in Family Court applications involving children with additional needs.

Liz completed her 12-month pupillage with 3PB and became a member of chambers in October 2023. Liz graduated with a first-class law degree before obtaining a distinction in her LLM, studied alongside her BPTC. Prior to pupillage, Liz worked with policymakers and charities to write and promote policies addressing domestic violence. She also advised on non-molestation and occupation orders through her work with the University of Law's pro bono clinic.

Liz also worked for two years as the in-house counsel for a company specialising in water filtration and enhancement. She delivered practical advice that considered the commercial reality of the business. She dealt with commercial property leases, employment/HR advice, and intellectual property matters, and drafted and negotiated a wide range of domestic and cross-border commercial agreements. Liz's drafting and negotiation skills greatly assist in financial remedy proceedings, where her attention to detail and practical approach are valued by clients. Liz's corporate experience also assists in matters where Liz is representing organisations. Liz is adept at dealing with internal authorisation procedures and cross-department communication when taking instructions and giving advice.

Liz currently sits on a policy advisory group examining Science and Technology, including AI and its use in education, local government, and the legal sector. Liz takes a keen interest in how AI is impacting practitioners and clients in these areas and how issues relating to technology and AI may be dealt with effectively as they arise in cases.

As a previous Open Championship Irish dancer, in her spare time Liz continues to enjoy non-competitive dance for exercise, as well as Pilates, swimming and hiking.

## **Academic qualifications**

- BPTC, University of Law, Birmingham, Very Competent
- LLB (Hons), University of Gloucestershire, First

## **Scholarships**

2023 Ann Goddard Scholar - Gray's Inn

## **Professional bodies**

- Member of Gray's Inn
- Family Law Bar Association
- Association of Lawyers for Children

# Expertise

## Education

Elizabeth Adams regularly acts for and advises all parties including parents, carers, young people, and local authorities. She has undertaken a variety of cases in the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability). She frequently deals with appeals relating to the contents of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans), focusing on sections B, F and I, Health and Social Care, and refusal to assess.

Examples of matters that Liz has dealt with include:

- Disputes over sections B and F, including disputes over whether something should be classed as provision that educates or trains, and including matters where expert witnesses disagree.
- Section I disputes, including local authority resistance of a parental preference on the grounds of inability to meet the child's needs, incompatibility with the provision of efficient education of others, and incompatibility with the efficient use of resources, and where EOTAS/EOTIC is being considered.
- Determination of an expensive and intricate EOTIC package of support for a young person with a very complex brain injury.
- Extended appeals that include recommendations for Health and Social care, and direct payment assessments.
- Matters that involve issues around transport.
- Issues involving non-compliance with directions and applications for late submission of evidence and adjournments.

Liz is happy to provide training in relation to education law.

Liz has a wider interest in other education law matters and prior to pupillage she provided pro-bono advice to parents, carers and young people through IPSEA's legal advice helpline. Liz also gave pro-bono assistance to SEND families impacted by attendance issues during Covid, where she assisted with interpreting updated government guidance to schools and drafting letters to request consideration for authorised absences in appropriate circumstances under a school leader's discretionary powers. Liz has also written legal advice around ensuring school behaviour policies comply with legal duties to students with additional needs and requesting reasonable adjustments. Liz has completed training to deal with Ofsted appeals.

Liz has a specialist interest in neurodiversity and mental health and ensures that her knowledge in this area remains current. Liz understands approaches that utilise the social model of disability. Liz's knowledge of neurodiversity extends to areas traditionally less well understood including neurodiversity in women and girls, PDA and Demand Avoidant profiles, and co-morbid chronic fatigue/autoimmune/hypermobility conditions.

## Family

Liz has a growing practice in family law encompassing finance, private law children, domestic abuse and injunctions, and public law children work.

Please see the sections below for further details.

## Finance

Liz has a busy Financial Remedies practice and has experience in representing parties at all stages of the process from First Appointments, through interim applications and Financial Dispute Resolution hearings, to Final Hearing and considering enforcement issues.

Liz also accepts instructions in Schedule 1/TOLATA matters and has provided successful representation in such proceedings.

Liz also has experience of successfully securing costs orders against opponents for her clients.

Examples of matters that Liz has dealt with include:

- Dealing with disclosure and compliance issues including successfully obtaining negative inferences.
- Obtaining directions for expert evidence including PODE reports.
- Matters involving pension issues and arguments relating to PAG2.
- Matters involving issues around provision for children with additional needs.
- Matters involving issues around working/earning capacity.
- Spousal maintenance/interim periodical payments.
- Determination of matrimonial/non-matrimonial property.
- Determination of whether a loan from family members is a hard or soft loan.
- Securing successful findings of dishonesty against a party who had submitted false evidence.
- Proposing and negotiating a Mesher order in a final settlement in which the Judge described the settlement as 'exactly the type of creative solution encouraged to meet needs' in a low asset matter.

Liz accepts instructions for written work including advice on offers for settlement and prospects of success.

## Private law

Liz acts for applicants and respondents, including 16.4 children's guardians. Liz has experience in a wide range of private law children matters, both those involving safeguarding issues and those where safeguarding concerns are not in issue.

Liz understands that disputes over the care of children between separated family members are highly stressful and emotive. Liz strives to provide a reassuring and pragmatic approach for her clients, ensuring that they are confidently guided through what can be a very daunting process.

Liz's clients appreciate her mindfulness of legal costs and ensuring matters can be resolved amicably and proportionately where possible. Liz has also successfully secured an uncommon order for the other party to pay her client's costs in a private law child contact dispute.

Liz has dealt with a wide range of applications, including applications to make and vary live with/spend time with orders, applications for enforcement, specific issue orders, prohibited steps orders, appointments of 16.4 children's guardians, and transferring proceedings to higher levels of Judge. Liz has experience with appealing orders.

Liz has successfully argued both for and against matters to be listed for finding of fact hearings and has successfully represented clients both in securing allegations as proven and resisting allegations against them as unproven.

Liz has extensive wider knowledge on Domestic Abuse and prior to her career in Law, Liz has drafted and advised on policy on tackling Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Liz understands the risks and ongoing difficulties that victims of abuse face. She has a comprehensive approach to ensuring court orders are made with safety in mind. Liz has also successfully resisted false allegations of abuse and is experienced in representing clients who have been subject to alienating behaviours from the

other party. Liz also deals with protective injunctions such as non-molestation orders and occupation orders.

Examples of matters that Liz has dealt with include:

- Successfully securing a s91(14) 'barring' order against an unsuccessful party from being able to bring future litigation without meeting stringent criteria.
- Successfully securing an order for a mother to relocate abroad with the children.
- Successfully securing the admissibility of a covert recording that led to Cafcass considering the evidence, which contributed to them making a positive recommendation for a parent to relocate abroad.
- Successfully resisting serious allegations of domestic abuse and securing a positive finding that the parent making the allegations had deliberately lied, leading to direct contact being re-established after three years.
- Successfully negotiating an intricate shared care order.
- Successfully resisting an interim care order being made following a s37 direction in complicated proceedings where a 16.4 guardian had made the recommendation.
- Drafting detailed and more complex disclosure orders for police, medical and educational professionals.
- Drafting advice on appeal for application to the LAA.

Recent cases include: M v F [2024] EWFC 55 (B)

## Children

Liz acts for all parties in Care matters, including parents and carers, guardians, and local authorities. Liz is experienced in seeing matters through from initial applications and hearings for urgent interim orders, including interim separation, through Case Management Hearings, Issues Resolution Hearings and Final Hearings.

Examples of matters that Liz has dealt with include:

- Successfully resisting Interim Care Orders/Deprivation of Liberty Order despite local authorities having been supported in their positions by the children's Guardians.
- Securing referral of matters to the FDAC.
- Representing vulnerable clients and making successful applications for cognitive assessments, intermediaries and other participation directions, and cross-examination ground rules.
- Issues around types of parenting assessments, including Parent Assess and residential assessments.
- Special Guardianship and Kinship placements.
- Issues around contact and the local authority's s34 duties.
- Issues around disclosure and withholding of information from a party.
- Chronic neglect.
- Domestic abuse.
- Substance/alcohol misuse.
- SEN, disability and mental health difficulties.

Liz accepts instructions for written work including advice on appeal prospects and drafting threshold documents.

## Articles

Technology has dramatically changed the ways in which we relate to each other and how we live our lives. In this article

written for Today's Family Lawyer, Elizabeth Adams examines how new technology could change how family law practitioners deal with case issues and evidence through 3 practical examples.

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