



Sarah Jennings

Year of Call: 2009

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Overview

Sarah specialises in a wide range of family work and regularly appears in the High Court and Single Family Court before District Judges and Lay Judges. Sarah acts in private and public law proceedings concerning children as well as injunction proceedings.

Recommendations

Sarah Jennings is ranked as a Leading junior in the Legal 500 2024 edition.

Legal 500 2024/Family: Children and Domestic Violence/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit

'She is a shrewd operator and a thorough advocate who is robust on her feet.'

Legal 500 2023/Child Law (Public and Private)/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit

Sarah Jennings is ranked in the **Legal 500 2022**/Child Law (Public and Private)/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit edition

'Sarah is an extremely personable member of the bar who manages to put clients at ease in circumstances where they would ordinarily be at their most apprehensive. However, whilst personable, Sarah manages to remain very firm with clients when needed, and it is this style that works incredibly well with some of the more challenging clients.'

Legal 500 2021/Child Law (Public and Private)/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit

'Very good with vulnerable clients.'

Legal 500 2020/Family and children law – Leading juniors

Academic qualifications

- Law LL.B (Hons), University of Bristol
- LL.M in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice, University of Leeds (Distinction)

Professional qualifications & appointments

- Bar Vocational Course, Cardiff University

Professional bodies

- Family Law Bar Association
- Western Circuit

Expertise

Family

Public Law Children, including cases involving:

- Non-accidental injuries to children
- Factitious illness syndrome (Münchausen syndrome)
- Addictions (drug and alcohol)
- Mental illness
- Learning disabilities both parents and children
- Sexual abuse of parents and children
- Domestic violence
- Chronic neglect
- Adolescent children who are separately represented from the Guardian
- Special Guardianship
- Third party interveners
- Contact with a child in care
- Contact with a child under a placement order
- Official Solicitor.

Private Law Children – All s8 Children Act matters including:

- Child Arrangement Orders
- Applications for a Prohibited Steps Order
- Applications for a Specific Issue Order
- Enforcement Applications
- Guardians
- Expert evidence
- Local Authority involvement
- The Local Authority acting as an intervener
- Allegations of domestic violence
- Allegations of child abuse

Cases involving a foreign element (i.e. removal from the jurisdiction).

Non-Molestation and Occupation Orders under Family Law Act 1996

Sarah is also qualified to accept work on a direct access basis.

Sarah prides herself on her thorough preparation, excellent client-care, approachability and persuasive advocacy style.

Recent cases:

- RE B (A Child) (Post-Adoption Contact) [2019] EWCA Civ 29
- Acted in care proceedings where a parent admitted to causing injury to a child to gain attention from medical professionals. This case involved the extensive analysis of medical and psychological evidence.
- Acted in proceedings where at the time of final hearing the Mother was engaging with alcohol addiction services after a twenty year history of alcohol abuse. This case considered whether this engagement was significant enough to indicate that the Mother could care for her child in the long-term.
- Case involving a child who disclosed sexual abuse to a social worker as well as allegations that family members had been aware of these incidents. During the course of proceedings it became apparent that Mother, Grandmother and other family members had themselves been victims of sexual abuse perpetrated by various family members.
- Acted in care proceedings where the 5 children ranged from 6-months to 16-years old. It became clear that Mother was capable of caring for some of the children but not others. Eldest two children were separately represented.
- Acted in a case where a grandmother was applying for a Special Guardianship Order where daughter had severe learning disabilities and could not cope alone.
- Acted for a mother in an application for contact with her children who were subject to care and placement orders made 18-months previously. Matters were also raised about Mother's capacity to make this application.
- Acted in a final hearing for the Official Solicitor who was representing a mother with severe learning difficulties. This case involved several children, also with learning difficulties, and numerous expert assessments of mother's ability to parent.
- Acted in a final hearing for a Mother who wished to relocate from the Bristol area to Devon for work. This was strongly opposed by the Father who claimed that this was purely to frustrate contact. This case involved significant evidence relating to the Mother's need to relocate for work and the job applications she had made in the Bristol area and elsewhere.
- Appeared in the County Court as an applicant in proceedings where children were placed with extended family on advice from the Local Authority. Local Authority appeared as interveners in this case.
- Acted in enforcement application where a Mother had refused contact for 4-months without making an application to vary or suspend the contact order.
- Represented a Father in a contact application with significant Local Authority Involvement and several Section 7 reports on the issue.
- Represented a Mother in proceedings where the bench concluded that her allegations of domestic abuse amounted to significant concerns for the children's safety and ordered a Section 37 report from the Local Authority.
- Acted in Family Law Act 1996 proceedings involving allegations that partner was drugging his girlfriend with cocaine until she became addicted.
- Represented the mother in her application for a non-molestation order where father's capacity was in question.

Articles:

Following the high profile case of toddler Ethan Williams, 3, who disappeared with his mother, tipstaff orders have been in the national press. Sarah Jennings has written a helpful and practical guide to anyone seeing the assistance of the tipstaff (enforcement officer for all orders made in the High Court) <http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed146613>

Sarah Jennings, Esther Lieu and DJ Exton provide an overview of the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts from a practitioner's and Judge's perspective. <http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed136182>

Articles

3PB Family law barrister Sarah Jennings examines the purpose of and procedure for obtaining tipstaff orders for the Family

Law Week.

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3PB's family law barrister Sarah Jennings provides summary for recent Court of Appeal case of Re M [2016] EWCA Civ 61 for the Family Law Week.

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An analysis by Sarah Jennings & Esther Lieu, 3PB, with District Judge Julie Exton look at the Family Drug and Alcohol Court for Family Law Week.

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