



Elizabeth McGrath KC

Head of Chambers

Year of Call: 1987

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Overview

Elizabeth McGrath KC (Liz) was called to the Bar in 1987 and has practiced exclusively in family law for over 20 years, with a focus on children and care disputes. She was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2014 and is 3PB's Head of Chambers.

Liz has extensive expertise in public law, acting for Local Authorities, parents, and children in the High Court and the Court of Appeal. She has been instructed in numerous complex fact-finding hearings involving allegations of sexual abuse and non-accidental injuries and has appeared in several reported cases.

She has also acted in some of the largest and most complex public law children cases undertaken in England and Wales, including involvement in two of the most significant operational care proceedings seen by the Family Court to date. She is highly experienced in cases arising from major safeguarding operations involving large numbers of children, multiple parties and extensive parallel investigations by the police and other agencies.

Her practice regularly places her at the centre of proceedings of exceptional scale, sensitivity and public importance, requiring the management of vast volumes of evidence, intricate disclosure issues and complex strategic case management. Elizabeth is particularly well regarded for her ability to navigate highly pressured and emotionally charged litigation whilst maintaining clear forensic focus in cases attracting substantial judicial, professional and media scrutiny.

She is often instructed in highly sensitive private law children disputes, particularly those involving residence, contact, relocation, LGBT parenting, and surrogacy. Her vast experience across both private and public family law, combined with her down-to-earth and approachable manner, inspires confidence in instructing solicitors and allows her to build a strong rapport with clients.

Liz's meticulous preparation ensures she quickly identifies the key issues in complex cases. While she provides firm and fair advice with a focus on early resolution where possible, she is also known for her concise, robust, and effective advocacy when a judicial decision is required.

Recommendations

Elizabeth McGrath KC is an expert family law practitioner with a broad range of experience in children work. She regularly handles cases of neglect as well as serious injury and sexual abuse.

Strengths: "Elizabeth instils an immediate sense of trust and confidence in her clients."

Chambers UK 2025/Family/Children/Midlands Bar/Band 1

She also takes on complex financial remedy cases concerning high net worth individuals. She is sought out for her experience in cases with valuation issues.

Strengths: "Excellent advocacy and bedside manner with clients. A force to be reckoned with."

Chambers UK 2024/Family/Children/Midlands Bar/Band 1

Strengths: "Elizabeth makes her mark in care proceedings."

"Ms McGrath is a tenacious and confident advocate."

"She has an understanding and sensitive bedside manner with extensive knowledge."

"Elizabeth is an absolutely outstanding KC."

Chambers UK 2023/Family/Matrimonial Finance/Midlands Bar/Band 1

Chambers UK 2023/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

Strengths: "She is a force to be reckoned with. Her preparation is second to none." "She really gets to the bottom of matters quickly and is supportive but firm with clients and their families."

Chambers UK 2022/Family/Matrimonial Finance/Midlands Bar

Chambers UK 2022/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

Strengths: "She has a wealth of experience and her advocacy skills are to be admired." "A very safe pair of hands. Procedurally good and always extremely well prepared. She goes the extra mile to make her clients feel comfortable in what are often very difficult circumstances."

Chambers UK 2021/Family/Matrimonial Finance/Midlands Bar

Chambers UK 2021/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

Strengths: "Her diligence, thoroughness and empathy for the client stand out."

Chambers UK 2020/Family/Matrimonial/Midlands Bar

"A heavyweight in family proceedings and a very popular advocate in the Birmingham community." "She is a great advocate and has client care skills."

Chambers UK 2019/Family/Matrimonial/Midlands Bar

Strengths: "A heavyweight in family proceedings, recently taken silk and a very popular advocate in the Birmingham community." "She is a strong practitioner with integrity."

Chambers UK 2018/Family/Matrimonial/Midlands Bar

Strengths: "An excellent silk. Her client care skills are second to none and she is robust in the face of difficult opponents." "A brilliant tactician and outstanding negotiator."

Chambers UK 2017/Family/Matrimonial/Midlands Bar

'Continues to grow an admirable practice in all areas of family law. Covers both public and private children law such as death of children, and also holds expertise in ancillary relief, high net worth business assets and pensions.

Strengths: "She is a fantastic barrister and is great to deal with. She provides excellent technical support and is great with the lay client; really human and down to earth."

"A heavyweight in family proceedings and a very popular advocate in the Birmingham community."

Chambers UK 2016/Family/Matrimonial/Midlands Bar

'A great legal brain.'

'If there's a fight to be had she won't back away but if there's a deal to be done she'll get it done.'

Chambers UK 2015/Family/Matrimonial/Midlands Bar

'Where there is a need for litigation Elizabeth is a fearless advocate, and a very skilled one at that.'

Chambers UK 2014/ Family/Matrimonial/v

'Outside the court room Elizabeth is a calming figure for parents in what can be very upsetting proceedings. She has an empathetic approach but maintains an ability to give robust advice. Her preparation of cases is rigorous and her ability to spot minute details is unparalleled. Her cross-examination and submissions are skillful, forensic and precise.'

Legal 500 2025/Family: Children and Domestic Violence/Leading Silks/Midlands Circuit - Tier 1

Legal 500 2025/Divorce and Financial Remedy/Leading silks/Midlands Circuit - Tier 1

Elizabeth McGrath KC is a 'fearless advocate' who handles public law cases, including ones with international elements. 'Elizabeth is a tenacious and confident advocate. Her attention to detail is meticulous.'

Legal 500 2024/Family: Children and Domestic Violence/Leading Silks/Midlands Circuit - Tier 1

Legal 500 2024/Divorce and Financial Remedy/Leading silks/Midlands Circuit - Tier 1

'Elizabeth is robust and empathetic. She reads the client well and tailors how she delivers her advice and guides them through the process accordingly.'

Legal 500 2023/Divorce and Financial Remedy/Leading silks/Midlands Circuit - Tier 1

3PB 'Elizabeth is tenacious and thorough in her preparation, with a canny ability to think outside the box.'

Elizabeth McGrath KC has more than three decades' experience in family law and is 'an exceptional cross-examiner'.

Legal 500 2023/Child Law (public and private)/Leading Silks/Midlands Circuit - Tier 1

'Elizabeth is able to make clients feel at ease and understood. Clients really feel that their case has been fought.'

Legal 500 2022/Child Law (public and private)/Leading Silks/Midlands Circuit

Legal 500 2022/Divorce and Financial Remedy/Leading Silks/Midlands Circuit

'She is extremely good at getting to the heart of the matter and connecting with the client.'

Legal 500 2021/Child Law (Public and Private)/Leading Silks

Legal 500 2021/Divorce and Financial Remedy/Leading Silks

'An exceptionally knowledgeable silk at the forefront of financial remedy in the region.'

Legal 500 2020/Family and Children/Leading Silks

'Very well known for her expertise in financial remedy cases.'

Legal 500 2018/19/Family and Children/Leading Silks

'Highly experienced in financial remedy proceedings.'

Legal 500 2017/Family and children, Leading Silk

Professional bodies

- Association of Lawyers for Children
- Family Law Association
- British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering

Expertise

Family

Liz was called to the Bar in 1987 and has practiced exclusively in the field of family law for over 20 years. She frequently appears in complex and sensitive cases involving children, both in public and private law proceedings, often dealing with intricate factual and expert evidence.

Liz has a proven ability to manage high-conflict cases with a calm and professional approach while dedicating significant energy to advocating for her clients.

She is also available for work internationally on all Children-related family law matters.

Reported Cases

- A Local Authority v Mother & Ors [2024] EWHC 3511 (Fam)
- P and E (Care Proceedings: Whether to Hold Fact-Finding Hearing), Re [2024] EWCA Civ 403
- The Mother & Anor v Shropshire Council & Anor [2024] EWHC 344 (Fam)
- A Local Authority -v- MM, NM, MC, CM and W, X, Y and Z (Children acting through their Guardian) [2020] EWFC 65
- Re ABC (Children: Overlaying Child) [2020] EWFC [57]
- B-T (A Child: Threshold Conditions) [2020] EWCA Civ 697
- RE AA (Children) & 25 Ors [2019] EWFC 64
- E (A Child) (Family Proceedings: Evidence), Re [2016] EWCA Civ 473; [2016] 4 W.L.R. 105
- Stockport MBC v AM [2016] EWFC 12
- A CC v AB [2015] EWFC 82
- W (Children) (Adoption: Procedure: Conditions), Re [2015] EWCA Civ 403; [2016] 1 F.L.R. 454; [2015] 3 F.C.R. 99; [2015] Fam. Law 765
- Coventry City Council v B [2012] EWHC 4014 (Fam); [2015] 1 F.L.R. 411; [2014] Fam. Law 954
- E (A Child) (Wardship Order: Child in Voluntary Accommodation), Re [2012] EWCA Civ 1773; [2013] 2 F.L.R. 63; [2013] Fam. Law 399
- K (A Child) (Post Adoption Placement Breakdown), Re [2012] EWHC 4148 (Fam); [2013] 1 F.L.R. 1; [2012] Fam. Law 1450
- Coventry City Council v O [2011] EWCA Civ 729; [2012] Fam. 210; [2012] 3 W.L.R. 208; [2012] P.T.S.R. 835; [2011] 2 F.L.R. 936; [2011] 3 F.C.R. 38; [2012] B.L.G.R. 279; [2011]
- Fam. Law 921; (2011) 108(27) L.S.G. 23; (2011) 161 N.L.J. 952; Times, July 1, 2011; Official Transcript
- J (A Child) (Care Proceedings: Injuries), Re [2009] EWHC 1383 (Fam); [2009] 2 F.L.R. 99; [2009] Fam. Law 479

Private law

Private Law Children and Domestic Abuse

Liz represents parents and guardians (where appointed) in highly sensitive residence and contact cases, often involving expert psychological or psychiatric evidence to assist the court in determining welfare issues. She is a formidable advocate in cases concerning allegations of sexual abuse, parental alienation, and complex private law disputes, including those involving domestic abuse, coercive control, and neglect.

Her extensive experience extends to cases with an international element, where urgent and comprehensive advice is

essential. She is particularly well-known for her expertise in relocation cases (both international and domestic) and disputes over child arrangements, including those involving allegations of alienating behaviours.

Liz has represented clients from diverse backgrounds, including individuals with learning difficulties. Her experience enable her to build strong client relationships and provide clear, strategic guidance to achieve the best possible outcome.

Care and adoption

Public Law Care and Adoption

Liz is a recognised expert in cases involving sexual abuse and the full spectrum of serious child protection concerns. She represents Local Authorities, parents, guardians, and other interested parties in the most complex and sensitive cases, including those involving serious non-accidental injury, sexual abuse, chronic neglect, child fatalities, and fabricated or induced illness (FII).

She has also acted in some of the largest and most complex public law children cases undertaken in England and Wales, including involvement in two of the most significant operational care proceedings seen by the Family Court to date. She is highly experienced in cases arising from major safeguarding operations involving large numbers of children, multiple parties and extensive parallel investigations by the police and other agencies.

Her practice regularly places her at the centre of proceedings of exceptional scale, sensitivity and public importance, requiring the management of vast volumes of evidence, intricate disclosure issues and complex strategic case management. Elizabeth is particularly well regarded for her ability to navigate highly pressured and emotionally charged litigation whilst maintaining clear forensic focus in cases attracting substantial judicial, professional and media scrutiny.

Her extensive experience in public law proceedings under children and adoption legislation includes cases with complex medical evidence, cross-jurisdictional placements, and matters where confidentiality, disclosure, and media restraint orders are critical. Liz is also well-versed in cases requiring the use of the High Court's inherent jurisdiction, particularly where urgent intervention or protective measures are needed.

Liz's expertise in handling highly sensitive cases, combined with her strategic approach and depth of experience, makes her a formidable advocate in this field.

FDR Hearing Service

Liz is available to sit as a private FDR judge. For more information please click [here](#).