



Emma Harman

Year of Call: 2003

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Overview

Emma is an experienced barrister who has extensive expertise in both Family law and Court of Protection matters.

Emma receives instructions in public law proceedings from local authorities, parents, grandparents and guardians in cases involving a variety of issues including child death, non-accidental injury, FII, chronic neglect, domestic violence, sexual abuse, learning disabilities and complex mental health.

Emma's private law practice involves intractable contact disputes, child abduction, and applications to permanently remove the child from the jurisdiction. Emma has a particular interest in cases involving domestic abuse and the nuances that can exist in allegations of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Emma is known for her robust, yet pragmatic and sensitive approach to her work.

Emma sits as a Recorder (family) and a DDJ on the Western Circuit.

Recommendations

Emma Harman is respected for her advocacy in public and private family law cases. Her caseload includes sensitive matters concerning sexual and domestic abuse, as well as non-accidental injuries. She represents parents and local authorities.

Strengths: "Emma Harman is a superb advocate."

"Emma Harman is everything you'd want in a child law barrister – great with clients, meticulously prepared, and spot-on judgement."

Chambers UK 2025/Family/Children/Western Bar

Strengths: "Emma is an excellent and thorough advocate."

"Emma's level of knowledge regarding my case was so strong."

"She is highly respected among the judiciary on children work."

Chambers UK 2024/Family/Children/Western Bar

Strengths: "Emma is excellent and really hard-working."

"Emma's advocacy is a work of art, she is a pleasure to watch in action."

Chambers UK 2023/Family/Children/Western Bar

Strengths: "Emma is meticulous in her preparation and particularly skilled in dealing with complex children matters when there are serious allegations of domestic violence or sexual allegations." "She is very thorough, good with clients and makes sensible decisions proportionate to the issues which override the case."

Chambers UK 2022/Family/Children/Western Bar

Strengths: "She is well prepared, good on the law and technicalities, and well liked by clients. She is firm but also sensitive in her approach to the matter, which means she is always well respected by the tribunal." "She is extremely diligent, friendly and hard-working."

Chambers UK 2021/Family/Children/Western Bar

Respected for her advocacy in public and private family law cases. She represents relatives, guardians and local authorities in connection with a vast array of subjects including abuse, violence, injury and abduction. In addition to her work on children matters, she also acts on complex financial remedy cases.

Strengths: "Emma Harman has a great manner with clients and is very thorough in her preparation of cases and attention to detail." "She's incredibly knowledgeable, well prepared and incredibly efficient."

Chambers UK 2020/Family/Matrimonial/Western Bar

"An extremely able junior with a keen eye for the detail of the case." "Very thorough and a superb advocate."

Chambers UK 2019/Family/Matrimonial/Western Bar

Emma Harman has expertise in representing vulnerable clients, with specific expertise in challenging sexual abuse cases and is described as a 'maestro in Children Act matters'. An 'exceptional and incredibly talented barrister'

'Emma is a first-class advocate and meticulous in her preparation for every case. Her written work is outstanding, with superb advocacy skills. Her creative and innovative thinking puts her in a class of her own.'

Legal 500 2025/Family: Children and Domestic Violence/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit- Tier 1

'Emma has an encyclopedic knowledge when it comes to child arrangement orders in domestic abuse contexts. She offers creativity for clients and sees subtle features in coercive control cases that many can't. Her judgment is spot on and her advocacy is a work of art. She has a very quick wit and navigates her way through the most difficult of cases with great humour and warmth.'

Legal 500 2024/Family: Children and Domestic Violence/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit- Tier 1

Emma Harman is 'a highly skilled advocate' who is 'excellent at getting to grips with difficult and complex cases'.

'Emma approaches every case with a professional, calm and empathetic outlook, and her attention to detail shines through in all she does. She is fastidious in achieving the best possible outcome for her clients. Her representation ensures that the client's voice is heard clearly throughout the proceedings. She provides clear and concise advice.'

Legal 500 2023/Child Law (Public and Private)/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit- Tier 1

'Emma is extremely client focused, approachable and well-organised. She focuses on the key issues in a case, is always well-prepared and thinks outside of the box in order to progress the client's case.'

Legal 500 2022/Child Law (Public and Private)/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit

'She is always extremely professional and works very hard on every case. She prepares cases to the minute detail and works with the instructing solicitor. She will always be in constant communication where she is covering a long length hearing and maintains an interest even after her involvement in the case has ended. She is approachable and very good with clients. Fantastic that she also participates in the Direct Access scheme.'

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

'Efficient, meticulous, and knowledgeable.'

Legal 500 2020/Family and children law/Leading juniors

'She has particular expertise in working with clients who have learning difficulties.'

Legal 500 2018/19/Family and children law/Leading juniors

'She has the makings of a future silk.'

Legal 500 2017/Family and children law/Leading juniors

"Emma knew every fine detail, case notes and it was evident that she had spent time, emailing for more information and questioning to make sure our evidence was as sound as it could be. Within her cross examination she was clever in her questioning, building and layering the picture to help us evidence our case. Emma was engaging, professional and a pleasure to work with. She is very much liked by all the Social Workers here and now we have used her for us we will be using her again."

Amy Bartram, Borough of Poole, 2019

" One of my Social Workers said 'how can any parent lose if they have Emma Harman.'

Amy Bartram, Borough of Poole, 2019

"Emma was fantastic and so on the ball, and in my opinion took control of the opposition barrister and the outcome of the matter. I would recommend her to anyone without hesitation."

Client, 2014

Academic qualifications

- BVC Inns of Court School of Law
- LLB (Hons) Brunel University
- Jules Thorn Scholar

Professional qualifications & appointments

- Recorder (Family, Western Circuit)
- Part-time Deputy District Judge on the Western Circuit (Civil and Family)

Professional bodies

- Family Law Bar Association
- Member of the Western Circuit

Expertise

Family

Emma's areas of expertise include:

Public Law

Emma receives instructions from local authorities, parents, grandparents and guardians in a variety of cases many involving complex issues such as non-accidental injury, child fatality, sexual abuse, significant mental health issues, cognitive / capacity issues and personality disorders. Emma has appeared against leading counsel as well as having recently been led by leading counsel in an infant death case.

Private Law

Emma is briefed on all aspects of private law proceedings, many of which have included domestic abuse, sexual abuse, intractable contact disputes, parental alienation, implacable hostility, r16.4 guardians, internal and international relocation and also child abduction.

Emma quickly gets to the heart of the issues in such cases with a view to achieving the best possible outcome for her clients in a timely manner, whilst at the same time striving for an outcome that will work for the entire family and avoid the need for future litigation.

Surrogacy

Emma has experience in assisted reproduction matters involving parental order applications as well as other alternatives including adoption and child arrangement orders, many of which involve international surrogacy arrangements.

Examples of recent cases:

Reported cases:

Re V and W (Children: finding of fact) [2023] EWFC 233

Representing a father in a private law finding of fact hearing. The court made serious findings of domestic abuse perpetrated by the mother towards the father, including false allegations of rape and assault, verbal and psychological abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. At the end of the fact-finding hearing the court changed the child arrangements from shared care to the mother having only supervised visits pending psychological assessment.

A Local Authority v G (Parent with Learning Disability) [2017] EWFC B94

Re FM (A Child) [2016] EWCA Civ 189

Represented a mother who appealed against a special guardianship order made in favour of the mother's sister. The case involved a variety of issues including allegations of significant mental health problems, drugs, and extremely complicated family dynamics. The Court of Appeal granted permission to the mother to appeal, however in its reserved judgement dismissed the appeal. In the Court of Appeal Judgment, Baker J commented: "The argument in support of the mother's appeal has been presented by Miss Harman and the court is grateful to her for her thoughtful and well-constructed submissions".

Unreported cases:

Re: PT 2022

Co-junior counsel in High Court fact-finding hearing including allegations of FII, in particular, multiple incidences of

poisoning of child

Re: L 2022

Junior counsel in finding of fact hearing regarding allegations of significant physical abuse of infant

Re: R 2017

Representing a mother in complex care proceedings in which multi-generational, inter-familial and inter-sibling sexual abuse is alleged. Ongoing proceedings.

Re O, Z & K [2017]

Led by Darren Howe QC, representing an uncle who had originally been in the pool of possible perpetrators in relation to over 42 various injuries to a 3 month old baby, which were said to have been sustained on at least four different occasions. The injuries included a catastrophic brain injury that led to the infant's death. The father was found by the Family Court to have caused the injuries by the Family Court and then later convicted in the Crown Court of murder.

Re: E and H [2017]

Representation of a father in longstanding care proceedings involving head and leg fractures to a child. The case involved leading counsel and a unique challenge by one party of an intervenor's capacity to conduct legal proceedings.

Re: W [2016]

Representation of a mother in which she was the subject of allegations of the attempted drowning of her child.

Re: A & J [2016]

Represented a mother in care proceedings including a finding of fact hearing in which the mother was in the pool of possible perpetrators in relation to a significant brain injury and retinal haemorrhaging of a 4 month old baby, or failure to protect in the alternative. Successfully exonerated the mother from any findings.

Re: I [2016]

Represented a maternal grandmother who sought the care of her daughter's 4 children. The mother had been murdered by the father of 2 of the children. The case lasted almost 2 years, however concluded with all 4 children being placed with the maternal grandmother under an SGO.

Re W [2015]

Represented a mother in an application for an interim care order with a plan for immediate removal of the child from the mother's care. Successfully defeated the application in its entirety despite opposition from the local authority, guardian, and adverse evidence from an adult psychiatrist and child psychologist.

Re: C 2014

Successfully represented a father against allegations of rape and threats to kill.

Re: G 2014

Represented a mother in private law proceedings in which the child had made numerous sexual abuse disclosures against the father. Successfully proved the allegations and achieved a no contact order and s.91(14) bar.

Court of Protection

Court of Protection

Emma regularly appears in the Court of Protection regarding health and welfare matters. Her experience includes deprivation of liberty issues, personal welfare, contact, medical treatment, LPAs and EPAs, property and financial affairs, statutory wills and complex capacity issues.

Emma represents Local Authorities, litigation friends, the Official Solicitor, Clinical Commissioning Groups and family members. Emma has an excellent ability to fearlessly represent her clients' interests, whilst also adopting a sensitive and collaborative approach to achieve the best outcomes for those she represents.

Within DOLs applications, Emma represents Local Authorities, CCGs and the Official Solicitor. Emma has a particular interest in the cross-over between family proceedings and the deprivation of liberty of young persons.

Articles

3PB Family Barrister Emma Harman explains the lessons that can be learned from *A Local Authority v G (Parent with Learning Disability)* [2017] EWFC B94.

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