



Stephen Abberley

Year of Call: 2000

Email Address: stephen.abberley@3pb.co.uk

Telephone: 0121 289 4333

Overview

Family barrister Stephen Abberley, who specialises in cases involving children, thrives on challenges and has over twenty years experience in cases involving familial homicide, sexual abuse, serious cranial and other injuries, international law and cross-cultural issues. Stephen's practice encompasses both public law cases – care, placement and adoption proceedings – and private law cases, acting for parents and children.

With a practice evenly split between representing parents, children and authorities, Stephen brings perspective on how to meet the challenges in the case likely to be presented by the opposing side.

Reported Cases:

- P And E (Care Proceedings: Whether to Hold Fact-Finding Hearing), Re - Find case law - The National Archives
- P (A Child: Fair Hearing) [2023] EWCA Civ 215
- Re D-S (Contact with Children in Care: Covid-19) [2020] EWCA Civ 1031
- Re C (A Child) (Application by Dr X and Y) [2015] EWFC 79 - [2017] 1 FLR 82
- Disclosure - Re C (A Child) (Application by Dr X and Dr Y) [2015] EWFC 79 - [2015] Fam Law 1457
- In the Matter of C (A Child) (Application by Dr X and Y) [2015] EWFC 79
- Re J (A Child) (Fact-finding) [2015]
- Re Y [2014] EWHC 3601 (Fam) - Lexis Citation 31

Recommendations

Stephen Abberley is respected for his undertaking of public and private children law work in particular. He represents parents, children and authorities, advising them on care, placement and adoption proceedings as well as factitious illness, sexual abuse, inflicted injuries and non-accidental injuries.

Strengths: "He is tireless in his pursuit of his client's goals." "He is a very strong advocate who is very experience and well respected."

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

Strengths: "Excellent advocate. Stephen has an innate ability to get to grips with a case eloquently and that helps to steer the

case in the right direction from the outset."

"A class act. He is extremely thorough in preparation and has a clear grasp of the key issues in every case. He is a confident and firm advocate."

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

Strengths: "He is an exceptional and thorough advocate."

"He is committed, reliable and has extensive knowledge."

"Stephen is an outstanding advocate with brilliant bedside manner."

"Stephen is talented, innovative and perceptive during the course of any case."

Chambers UK 2023/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

Strengths: "His legal analysis, arguments, and knowledge in public law children work are consistently impressive."

Chambers UK 2022/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

Strengths: "His preparation is meticulous and his paperwork is exceptional. He also goes the extra mile for his clients." "He has wide-ranging and up-to-date legal knowledge and exceptionally strong drafting skills, and provides careful, well-prepared advocacy."

Chambers UK 2021/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

"Respected for both his undertaking of public and private children law work and complex financial proceedings. Represents parents, children and authorities, advising them on care, placement and adoption proceedings as well as factitious illness, sexual abuse and non-accidental injuries."

Chambers UK 2020/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

"Respected for both his undertaking of public and private children law work and complex financial proceedings."

Chambers UK 2019/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

Recent work: "Highly experienced and approachable." "A highly respected individual."

Chambers UK 2018/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

"A highly respected individual"

Chambers UK 2017/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

"Abberley is well respected for his work in both complex financial proceedings and sensitive public and private law children matters, and is particularly admired for his flexibility and welcoming manner with clients."

Chambers UK 2016/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

"He really gets to grips with the arguments."

"I use him regularly and am always very impressed."

Chambers UK 2015/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

Expertise: "He is a highly capable advocate, tenacious and excellent with clients."

"Stephen is knowledgeable, competent, very willing to assist and easy to contact."

Chambers UK 2014/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

"Stephen is particularly good at care proceedings"

Chambers UK 2013/Family/Children/Midlands Bar

'Stephen is a first-rate junior and rivals his silk colleagues in his case analysis, paperwork and cross-examination. His case preparation and analysis is second to none. He is a first choice for complex children matters, particularly when physical abuse is an issue.'

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

Stephen is very knowledgeable on the medical side. He is robust and willing to challenge experts and court decisions alike.'

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

'Stephen has the ability to analyse a case quickly and effectively. His cross-examination is forensic and incisive. He is always helpful and goes the extra mile in serving a client's case.'

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

'Incredible legal knowledge and research ability. Stephen superb detailed and highly persuasive written documents. A thorough and careful advocate with real attention to detail.'

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

'He provides thorough and detailed advice in a calm and reassuring manner.'

Legal 500 2021/Child Law (Public and Private)/Midlands

'Tenacious and calm under pressure.'

Legal 500 2020/Family and children/Midlands

Academic qualifications

- LLB (Hons) University of Nottingham

Expertise

Family

With over twenty years of experience at the family Bar, Stephen Abberley never forgets just how daunting, confusing, and threatening court proceedings can seem to be for parents, children and even professionals. His aim is to guide people through proceedings in a way that helps them manage their fears, understand what is involved and present their case to achieve the best outcome.

PUBLIC LAW – CARE PROCEEDINGS, ADOPTION

Cases concerned with:

- Serious non-accidental injuries, including brain injuries and fractures
- Alleged fabricated or induced illness in children, including suffocation and poisoning, false reporting of illness
- Sexual abuse, within families and beyond

Represents:

- Parents accused of inflicting serious and life-threatening injuries
- Parents accused of involvement in the sexual abuse of their own or other children
- Parents of children with complex health needs, accused of inducing or fabricating illness
- Local authorities bringing proceedings in the most serious of cases, managing cases from issue to fact-finding and final hearing
- Children, either through children's guardians or directly, who are the subject of care proceedings or who are implicated in causing harm to other children

Appears before and against:

- Mainly Circuit and High Court judges in the Family Court
- District Judges in the Family Court
- The Court of Appeal
- Frequently acts against leading counsel
- Will act as leader with other juniors when case requires

Skillsets

- Up-to-date knowledge of complex medical issues and sound research skills
- Ability to explain complex information to clients
- Advises with firmness and compassion
- No-nonsense oral and written advocacy

PRIVATE LAW - CHILDREN

Stephen Abberley has a strong private law children practice, including regularly acting in private adoption cases. His busy caseload sees him:

- Frequently instructed to represent children in complex cases
- Represent parents on a private client basis
- Experienced in private adoption cases – relatives and stepparents
- Appear before all levels of tribunal, from lay magistrates to the Court of Appeal
- Experienced in cases with international and cross-cultural elements
- Provide clear and realistic advice, as well as forthright advocacy

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