



**Five Pump
Court Chambers**

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Catherine Sparks

Barrister

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Practice overview

Catherine is a family law specialist, advising and representing clients in claims involving children and injunctive relief. Having built up a common law practice which encompassed family, criminal and civil work, she has broad knowledge of the law, procedures and best tactics. She is a strong and determined advocate. Catherine appears in all levels of court from the family proceedings court to the Court of Appeal.

Catherine is regularly instructed in public and private children law cases. She has a huge amount of knowledge and experience and is instructed in those cases which are particularly complex or difficult. She is regularly instructed in cases where there has been a conviction of murder, dealing with the children law elements which arise following conviction. She also deals with injunctive relief cases under the Family Law Act 1996. Catherine is clear but compassionate in her advice and is very good at dealing with stressed and emotional clients. For her clients, she represents a safe pair of hands.

Children law (public)

Catherine has a lot of experience in case cases, and is instructed on behalf of parents, wider family members and the child/children. She also regularly acts in applications for special guardianship and placement orders.

Catherine frequently acts in cases where there are allegations of non-accidental harm to children, sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect. She is particularly valuable in cases where there are also ongoing criminal proceedings as she has a strong background in both jurisdictions. She is also instructed in cases where there are overlapping criminal proceedings dealing with the family and children law elements which arise. In the last year, she has acted in the family proceedings relating to the murder of Bernadette Walker by her stepfather, and those relating to the killing of Christopher Higgs by his partner Charlie Stevenson.

Catherine has a compassionate approach and is very good at managing vulnerable clients and witnesses, guiding them sensitively through the court process.

Children law (private)

Catherine appears in all matters relating to contact and residence disputes. She is very good at dealing with clients in stressful and emotional circumstances, faced with difficult decisions about their children's future. She is sensitive to their position, but remains pragmatic about the best way to approach applications which may include negotiations outside of court as well as robust litigation if necessary. She advises on applications relating to residency of children after relationship breakdown, and contact with the non-resident parent.

Catherine also deals with applications dealing with a range of other issues such as change of name, change of school or removal from the jurisdiction. Catherine has a lot of experience of applications under s91(14) to bring finality to proceedings.

Memberships

- Kent Bar Mess
- Family Law Bar Association

Notable Cases

Peterborough CC v Walker: acting in care proceedings for a man convicted of murdering his step-daughter and concealing her body.

Lincolnshire CC v Stevenson: acting for a mother who was found guilty of the manslaughter of her partner in respect of the subsequent care proceedings in respect of their young child.

P v R: Successfully acted for a father in proceedings where sexual abuse allegations involving the child were made against him by the mother but were not found proven by the court and

enabled the court to make an order for contact.

M v D: Represented a mother who made allegations of domestic abuse against the father which were upheld by the court and resulted in an order for indirect contact only.

Re S: Instructed on behalf of the father in care proceedings where the child had suffered non-accidental injuries and both parents were in the pool of perpetrators. No findings were made against the father.