



Louise Sapstead

Year of Call: 2004

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Overview

Louise was called to the bar in 2004 and joined KCH Garden Square upon successful completion of her pupillage the following year. She joined St Ives as a tenant in September 2024.

Whilst initially practicing in all areas of law, Louise has specialised exclusively in family law since 2009. By having such a diverse practice background, Louise has the unique skills to be able to understand and appreciate how the different areas of law can intersect.

Louise has considerable experience of public law and private law Children Act proceedings with a particular emphasis on complex finding of fact hearings (including the death of children) where she acts on behalf of all parties and regularly cross-examines paediatricians, radiologists, psychiatrists, psychologists and other expert witnesses on many issues.

She acts for local authorities, parents and children and is often sought out to represent the most vulnerable of clients, particularly those with issues with regards to capacity. Louise has acted for many competent children and has considerable ability to explain complex issues and explore emotional and distressing matters with young people.

Practice Areas

Private Law Children

This area of law provides a particular challenge to all parties involved. Louise has considerable experience in acting for parents, children and other family members. Increasingly at least one party is representing themselves and Louise believes that dealing with such litigants with respectful but firm challenge is often a successful approach.

Louise has been instructed in the full range of private law cases, including those involving:

- All applications under the Children Act 1989 and the Family Law 1996.
- Fact finding hearings have considered serious injuries to children and babies (including death), sexual abuse, significant physical and emotional injury.
- Cases involving Re W applications including the cross-examination of children and other vulnerable witnesses.

Public Law Children

Louise prides herself on representing all sides in this often contentious and emotional area of family law. This allows her to

understand the motivations, strategies and priorities of the 'other side'. She has consequently represented local authorities with the same vigour as parents, grandparents, children via their CAFCASS Guardians, intervenors and teenagers.

Louise is very experienced in the tailoring her explanations to the needs of a client especially those interpreters and, increasingly without intermediaries.

Louise has been instructed in the full range of care cases, including those involving:

- Where one parent has killed another.
- Where a parent or intervenor has attempted to, or has, killed a child.
- Fabricated or induced illness.
- Unexplained injuries at all levels of seriousness, including brain and life-changing injuries to children.
- Mental health and substance misuse.

She has extensive experience of the many complex legal problems which arise in such cases, including:

- Cases involving conflicting expert opinions.
- Vulnerable parties and witnesses (including children).
- Local Authorities arguing about designation.
- Cases involving immigration issues.
- Cases with interlinked criminal proceedings.

Louise is regularly instructed in the High Court.

Qualifications

University of Leicester (International Law) LLB

Nottingham Law School BVC

Recommendations

Legal 500 2024 - Family: Children & Domestic Violence Ranked: Tier 3

Legal 500 2023 - Child Law (Public and Private) Ranked: Tier 3

"Louise is an effective communicator and keeps instructing solicitors and clients updated. She has always accommodated hearings ... knowing that continuity of counsel is important and very much appreciated by the client and other advocates in the matter. She always remains calm, which is always much appreciated when dealing with a complex matter."

Legal 500 2022 - Child Law (Public and Private) Ranked: Tier 3

"Louise is very good with the clients. She is extremely knowledgeable, has a lovely approach and provides clear feedback after hearings in a timely way. She is very accommodating."

Appointments

Direct access qualified.

Memberships

Family Law Bar Association

Midland Bar

Resolution

Nottingham Law Society

Reported Cases

- H and Others (Children) (Fact Finding: Rib Fractures) [2021] EWHC 2041 (Fam)
- XX, YY and Child H (Rev1) [2022] EWFC 10
- Nottingham City Council v The Mother & Ors [2022] EWHC 2334 (Fam)
- Derbyshire County Council v AA & Ors [2022] EWHC 3404 (Fam)
- Derbyshire County Council v The Mother & Ors [2023] EWHC 2552 (Fam)
- Nottinghamshire County Council v Mother & Ors [2023] EWHC 3512 (Fam)
- X (Secure Accommodation: Lack of Provision) [2023] EWHC 129 (Fam)

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