

1GC | Family Law

Denise Gilling KC

Year of Call: 1992 Year of Silk: 2021



Practice Overview

Denise is a Family Law practitioner specialising in the law relating to children with a particular focus on complex public and private law children cases appearing in all levels of court including the High Court and Court of Appeal. She also specialises in adoption (including inter-country adoption), Wardship/inherent jurisdiction and Court of Protection matters.

Children (Public Law)

Denise has extensive experience and is regularly instructed by Local Authorities, parents, guardians and separate representation of competent children. She regularly appears in complex cases involving fact-finding hearings. Denise has particular expertise in the following:

- Sexual abuse including cases involving children who are alleged abusers;
- Physical harm including Female genital mutilation;
- Non-accidental injury including head injury cases;
- Care proceedings involving concurrent criminal proceedings such as child cruelty, neglect and sex offences;
- Cases with an International or cultural dimension a suspected trafficked children;
- Serious emotional abuse and chronic neglect cases;
- Fabricated induced illness

Denise regularly acts for teenage parents, when they are both the subject child and teenage parent respondent; parents with learning disabilities or mental health problems including through the Official Solicitor. She is instructed in cases which requires the cross examination of a child or vulnerable adult. Denise has also been instructed where there has been a death of a child.

Notable cases in public children law in which Denise has acted include:

R (Care Proceedings Joinder of Foster Carers) [2021] EWCA Civ 875

R (A Child: Care Order) [2017] EWHC 364 (Fam)

H (A Child) [2007] EWCA Civ 392

Children (Private Law)

Denise regularly acts in private law cases primarily acting for 16.4 guardians and the separate representation of competent children. She appears in complex private law matters which involve fact finding such as physical harm. She has acted in cases with international elements.

International Family Law

Denise acts or advises in cases involving international adoption and abductions cases.

Notable Cases

Re A (Care Proceedings: Non-Accidental Injuries: Identifying the Perpetrator) [2025] EWFC 54

M (A Child: Intermediaries) [2025] EWCA Civ 440

Griffiths v Tickle [2021] EWCA Civ 1882

R (Care Proceedings Joinder of Foster Carers) [2021] EWCA Civ 875

Z v Y (Revocation of Adoption Order) [2021] EWHC 1153 (Fam)

H-N And Others (Children) (Domestic Abuse: Finding of Fact Hearings) (Rev 2) [2021] EWCA Civ 448

B (Secure Accommodation Order), Re (Rev 1) [2019] EWCA Civ 2025

H (A Child) [2007] EWCA Civ 392

R (A Child: Care Order) [2017] EWHC 364 (Fam)

What the Directories Say

"Denise is an intellectual heavyweight and a clear communicator" Tier 4 - Legal 500, 2025

"Denise is very clear in her advocacy and has a way of getting to the heart of an issue in her cross-examination of witnesses. She is a personable advocate who prepares her cases in great detail." Legal 500, 2024

"An exceptional advocate. She puts her client's case with clarity and authority. Her case analysis is second to none. Clients have great confidence in her ability. She is empathetic in her approach whilst at the same time being firm in her advice." Legal 500, 2022

"Denise has astounding technical ability and a keen eye for detail when dealing with particularly complex issues (around medical disclosure, for example). Denise has a fantastic approach to advocacy (clear, concise and delivers a punch)." Tier 5 - Legal 500, 2021

"An extraordinarily talented barrister with a keen eye for detail." Tier 5 - Legal 500, 2020

Education

LLB (Hons)

Appointments

Co-Vice Chair of the Association of Lawyers for Children (2024-)

Member of the President's Working Group on Adoption (2021-2024)

Member of the President's Working Group on Supervision Orders (2020-2023)

Awards

Family Law Silk of the Year 2022

Memberships & Associations

Association of Lawyers for Children

Family Law Bar Association

Seminars and Lectures

Denise has provided training for Social Workers. She has also lectured on various aspects of the law, provided seminars/training for the voluntary sector on subjects including female genital mutilation and been involved with numerous children's charities/organisations.