

1GC | Family Law

Gillian Downham

Year of Call: 1993



Practice Overview

Having practised in family law for many years and having been a member of the Mental Health Act Commission, Gillian now specialises in the chairing of reviews, investigations and tribunals.

She continues to chair complex mental health homicide investigations under Department of Health Guidance HSG(94)27.

She is founder and Director of a social enterprise not-for-profit limited company, Sequeli, which provides training for chairs of mental health investigation, domestic homicide reviews, children's serious case reviews and adult safeguarding serious case reviews.

Gillian is a part-time tribunal judge of the First-tier (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) Mental Health in England and Wales. She has been appointed as a part-time chair of the new Mental Health Tribunal Service in Guernsey, Sark and Alderney where she has advised on the development of their new Mental Health Law.

Children (Public Law)

International Family Law

Reported Inquiries

Report into the Care and Treatment of Richard Gray: published by Wiltshire Health Authority and Wiltshire Social Services - October 2001.

Report into the Care and Treatment of Matthew Martin: published by Avon Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Strategic Health Authority (AGW SHA)- July 2003

Report into the Care and Treatment of Sarwat Al-Assaf: published by Gedling Primary Care Trust, Nottingham - April 2004

Report into the Care and Treatment of Patient A: published by Gedling Primary Care Trust, Nottingham - September 2005

Education

BSc Soc Sci (Hons) Psychology

Diploma in Social Work (CQSW)

MA (Econ) Social Policy and the Organisation of Welfare

Appointments

Trainer for Approved Social Workers under the Mental Health Act.

Legal President Mental Health Review Tribunal.

Chair of Independent Mental Health Inquiries after Homicide

Gillian is Chair of the Regulation of Medicines Review Panel of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), chairing independent reviews and hearing from pharmaceutical companies and the UK licensing authority where there are disputes over marketing authorisation, clinical trials, wholesale dealing and manufacturing of medicines for human use, homeopathic medicines and herbal medicines.

Memberships & Associations

Member [Family Law Bar Association \(FLBA\)](#)

[Association of Lawyers for Children](#)

[Western Circuit](#)

[Devon & Exeter Medico Legal Association](#)

Fellow of the Centre for Social Policy at the charity for children's research the [Social Research Unit, Dartington, Devon.](#)

[Member of the Mental Health Act Commission](#), including Deaths Investigator

Publications

Gillian is author of articles connected with reviews and investigations, including;

Three reasons to be cheerful about domestic homicide reviews 4 January 2012 Police Professional Magazine

Improving the standard of serious case reviews 28 January 2011 Community Care website

Case reviews: the need for improvement 7 December 2010 Police Professional Magazine

Learning Lessons: Using Inquiries for Change, Gillian Downham and Richard Lingham, Journal of Mental Health Law, Spring 2009, pages 57-69

She is author of published mental health inquiries including those on specific mental health topics;

Report of Independent Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of MN. Published June 2006 and commissioned by Avon Gloucestershire & Wiltshire Strategic Health Authority. This homicide inquiry consulted nationally on the subject of mental health care planning, made national recommendations which influenced Department of Health Guidance and was referred to in House of Lords debate on the Mental Health Act 2007 (Column 531)

Report of Independent Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Patient A. Published November 2005 and commissioned by Gedling PCT, Nottingham. Homicide inquiry with issues concerning accessibility of services to South Asian community.

Report of Independent Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Sarwat Al-Assaf. Published April

2004 and commissioned by Gedling PCT, Nottingham. Homicide Inquiry concerning issues of ethnicity and mental health care of the profoundly Deaf.

Report of Independent Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Matthew Martin. Published July 2003 and commissioned by Avon, Gloucestershire & Wiltshire SHA. Homicide inquiry concerning care planning for service users who disengage from community care.

Seminars and Lectures

Gillian runs seminars and lectures on research, commissioning, chairing and writing reports for reviews and investigations in the areas of children's services, domestic violence, mental health and adult safeguarding.

She has given talks at the Centre for Social Policy Dartington on developing training, national policy and research in the areas of mental health investigations, children's serious case reviews and domestic homicide reviews.

Personal

Gillian has a passion for contemporary photography, travel and art. She enjoys family and friends and is a Quaker.