

# 1GC | Family Law

## Steven Ashworth

Year of Call: 2006



## Practice Overview

Steven undertook a common law pupillage and initially practised in criminal, civil and family law, including matrimonial finance work. He now specialises in family law in relation to children. He is regularly instructed to represent parties in public and private law children cases at all levels of court including the High Court, and has appeared successfully in the Court of Appeal.

Steven accepts public access instructions in appropriate cases.

## Children (Public Law)

Steven has extensive experience of complex care proceedings, in which he acts for Local Authorities, parents, children (through their children's guardian or separately represented) and extended family members. He is instructed in cases involving:

- Representation of vulnerable parents including those with learning or other disabilities, with some requiring the assistance of an intermediary;
- Allegations of serious inflicted injury;
- Allegations of sexual abuse against adults and children;
- Complex international issues including placements of children in foreign jurisdictions;
- Cultural issues;
- Allegations of radicalisation;
- Appeals

He is also instructed in applications to represent parties in applications for forced marriage protection orders and FGM protection orders.

## Steven's notable and reported cases in this area include:

*Re A (Children)* [2020] EWCA Civ 448

### *Re E (2017)*

Steven is currently representing a Local Authority in care proceedings arising from grave and life-changing injuries sustained by a young baby when the family was living abroad. The case has involved jurisdictional issues, the instruction of five independent medical experts and a fact finding hearing at which the Deputy High Court Judge concluded that the child's injuries were caused by the father.

### *Re S and Others (Children) (2017)*

Steven represented the father of one child in care proceedings where the court had to determine whether she should be placed with her father but separated from her half-siblings whose own father was able to offer a home to the entire sibling group.

### *Re Z and Another (2016/2017)*

Steven acted for a Local Authority throughout protracted 77-week proceedings in which jurisdictional and bureaucratic obstacles in the local authority's attempts to place the subject children with extended family members in Ireland were eventually overcome.

### *Re C (A Child) [2016] EWHC 3171 (Fam); [2017] 4 WLR 19; [2017] 1 FLR 1665*

Steven, led by Sarah Morgan QC, acted for the Local Authority, in care proceedings involving allegations of radicalisation. Application by the Secretary of State for the Home Department to discharge an order for disclosure.

### *Re C (A Child) (No. 2) (Application for Public Interest Immunity) [2017] EWHC 692 (Fam); [2017] 2 FCR 621*

Steven was again led by Sarah Morgan QC, at this hearing to determine the application by the Secretary of State for the Home Department's application for public interest immunity in these proceedings concerning allegations of radicalisation.

### *Re C (A Child) (No. 3) (Application for Dismissal or Withdrawal of Proceedings) [2017] EWFC 37*

Steven appeared alone for the Local Authority in these ongoing care proceedings. Pauffley J declined to dismiss or give permission for the care proceedings to be withdrawn. Steven is instructed to represent the Local Authority at the seven-day fact-finding hearing in this matter in Spring 2018.

### *KCC v M and O (Children, Criticism of Local Authority) [2017] EWFC B12*

Steven acted for the respondent father in care proceedings which involved significant criticism of the conduct of the Local Authority, some of which arose from covert recordings which Steven obtained permission to admit into evidence. This case attracted significant media interest ([The Daily Mail](#), [The Telegraph](#), [The Times](#) and [The Sun](#)) owing to comments made by the social worker to the parents that christening the child would hinder attempts to have the child adopted.

### *Re L (2016/2017)*

Steven represented a vulnerable mother with an IQ of 58 throughout care proceedings which concluded with the child placed within the family, where the Local Authority had sought removal to foster care and, until the last minute, a care plan of adoption.

### *LB Tower Hamlets v M, F and A and B (Children) [2016] EWFC B34*

Care proceedings, acting for the Local Authority.

### *Re J and Others (2016)*

Steven acted for a Local Authority in care proceedings concerning eight children where both parents were deaf and the father also required the assistance of a deaf intermediary.

#### *Re S (2016)*

Steven acted for the father in care proceedings concerning a three-year-old girl in which the Local Authority sought findings against the mother, father and an intervener, including findings of sexual assault and rape of the child sought against the father. Steven represented the father at the eight-day fact-finding and welfare hearing, as a result of which no findings were made against the father and the proceedings concluded with an order placing the child in his care.

#### *Re T and Another (2016)*

Steven secured findings of non-accidental injury in the case of a baby who suffered a number of fractures in the care of his parents. The experts instructed included an endocrinologist to consider whether the fractures could be explained by Vitamin D deficiency.

#### *Re I (A Child) (2015)*

Steven represented the mother at the final hearing in care proceedings and a contested specific issue application for the child to be circumcised, following a fact-finding hearing where the court found that she had caused injuries to her baby by shaking.

#### *A Local Authority v DG and Others [2013] EWHC 734 (Fam); [2014] 1 FLR 1216; [2013] Fam Law 789*

Steven acted for a Local Authority in care proceedings before Theis J where the father was represented by leading and junior counsel. The case concerned six Roma Slovakian children who had severe neglect and included involvement from the Central Authority of the Slovak Republic.

#### *Re A (A Child) (2013/2014)*

Steven represented the respondent mother throughout care proceedings where the baby was found to have a number of fractures caused at different times. At the fact-finding hearing the court concluded that the father caused all of the injuries, that the mother was not in the pool of perpetrators and that it had not been proven that she had failed to protect the child. The mother separated from the father and Steven subsequently represented her in separate non-molestation order proceedings. The Local Authority proposed rehabilitation to the mother but abandoned this plan when telephone records showed that the parents had remained in illicit contact. Steven secured the rehabilitation of the child to the mother's care following a contested final hearing, the Local Authority and guardian having favoured placement with a distant family member.

## **Children (Private Law)**

Steven regularly acts for parties in private law children proceedings, especially those where children are separately represented; where there are international issues, including applications to remove from the jurisdiction; and where there are serious safeguarding concerns requiring fact finding hearings.

### **Steven's notable and reported cases in this area include:**

### *Re C (2016)*

Steven represented the applicant father before Bodey J at a contested hearing seeking permission to temporarily remove the child from the jurisdiction to a non-Hague Convention country. Permission was granted subject to conditions.

### *MJK v FJK and EJK and VJK (Children) [2015] EWFC B190*

Acted for the applicant father in private law children proceedings where findings were sought by the mother that the father had sexually abused two of their children. No findings were made.

### *Re S (A Child) [2014] EWCA Civ 1682*

Steven successfully represented the respondent father at the Court of Appeal (having not appeared below) in the mother's appeal against a shared residence order made by consent and a later sole residence order in favour of the father.

## **International Family Law**

Steven accepts instructions in cases involving international family law issues including applications under the Hague Convention.

## **Domestic Violence & Injunctions**

Steven represents applicants and respondents in applications under the Family Law Act 1996 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. He also has experience of representing parties in applications for forced marriage protection orders and FGM protection orders.

## **What the Directories Say**

*"He really is at the top of his game. Steven is honestly one of the most dedicated and hardworking barristers solicitors have had the pleasure of working with in recent times."* **Tier 2 – Legal 500, 2022**

*"Incredibly hardworking. Masters information quickly and effectively. He has a gentle manner that masks a sharp mind."* **Legal 500, 2021**

*"Thorough, fights his client's corner, and has a gravitas about him that you would expect from someone more senior." "Courteous and amazing with difficult clients, he grasps the detail and goes all out for his clients."* **Chambers and Partners, 2021**

*"Has a tactically astute mind allied to a natural authority and court presence beyond his call."* **Legal 500, 2020**

*"His indefatigable approach to his clients and cases is renowned at the Bar and beyond."* **Legal 500, 2018/19**

*"A strong performer with good instincts and a willingness to work hard."* **Legal 500, 2017**

## Education

LLB (Hons) Bachelor of Laws – University of Leeds

BVC – BPP Law School, London

Sir Geoffrey Veale Scholarship (The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple)

## Memberships & Associations

[The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple](#)

[Family Law Bar Association](#)

Seminars, Publications and Training

Steven regularly provides seminars and training to instructing solicitors and local authorities.

Personal

Steven's interests include travel, music, sport (mostly as a spectator) and eating well.