

Claire Athis Schofield

2016 Lincolns Inn, athisschofield@deanscourt.co.uk



Education	Professional Associations
Davenant Foundation School, Essex	Northern Circuit
Christ Church, Oxford – PPE – Upper Second	FLBA
Hope University, Liverpool – PGCE – Distinction	Association of Lawyers for Children
Chester College of Law – GDL – Distinction	
Manchester Metropolitan University – BPTC – Outstanding	

Areas of Specialism
Family
Financial Remedies and Family Property
Children (Private)

Claire joined Chambers in 2018 having undertaken a Family Law pupillage under the supervision of Miss Susan Deas, during which she specialised in financial remedy and private children's proceedings.

Claire is familiar with complex financial matters, including issues around company valuation, farming and property businesses and inherited wealth.

Since being in practice, Claire has undertaken a wide range of ancillary relief work, regularly taking matters from FDA on to FDR and, if required, to Final Hearing. Solicitors appreciate Claire's hands-on approach, and her focus on negotiating the best deal possible for her client at the earliest opportunity. Claire will represent clients within the forum of Alternative Dispute Resolution, such as Round Table Meetings or Private FDRs, giving advice on offers for settlement at each stage. She has experience of dealing with allegations of non-disclosure; personal, financial and litigation misconduct and disputed business valuations.

Claire also undertakes preliminary applications within matrimonial finance proceedings, for example, Maintenance Pending Suit (MPS), Legal Services Payment Order (LSPO), Section 37 and Notice to Show Cause applications.

Claire will act for intervenors within proceedings seeking to protect family assets from a spousal claim. Claire also welcomes instructions on Schedule 1 Children Act and Enforcement applications.

In Private Children's Act proceedings, Claire deals with complex parental disputes, often with issues arising from allegations of domestic abuse and parental alienation, including where there has been a complete cessation of contact with one parent. Claire has experience of dealing with applications featuring mental health concerns, alcohol and drug misuse, internal and international relocation, education and vaccination. Confident in handling cases where experts are instructed or the Local Authority involved, Claire's practical and friendly approach is welcomed by her clients. She is regularly instructed in Finding of Fact and Final Hearings, where her forensic and analytical style of advocacy is appreciated.

Prior to specialising in Private Law, Claire acted for Local Authorities, parents, and children within a wide range of Public Children's Act proceedings, including cases involving allegations of inflicted injury, sexual abuse and fabricated illness.

Claire has a busy court-based practice, however, she is also able to provide prompt written advice in all areas of family law. Claire regularly undertakes seminars for Solicitors in aspects of Financial Remedy law and practice.

Prior to joining Chambers Claire had a professional background in banking and education and she gained a wealth of practical advocacy

experience from six years spent leading the largest professional trade union branch in the North-West. As an active trade unionist, Claire had daily involvement in dispute management and resolution, often within long-running, complex situations and this has informed her pragmatic approach to solving her clients' problems.

Notable Cases

S v S

Practice Area: Family – Financial Remedy Proceedings

Representing the Applicant Wife, who was caring for five children of the family, one with significant disabilities, at Financial Dispute Resolution, Claire negotiated a final settlement which saw the entirety of the sale proceeds of the Former Matrimonial Home safeguarded for the Applicant's housing needs.

T v H

Practice Area: Family - TOLATA proceedings

Claire represented the Claimant who co-owned two properties with his ex-partner (the Defendant) and had been unable to sell the property he had use of, or be released from the mortgage of the property occupied by the Defendant. At the first Directions Hearing, Claire negotiated a final settlement involving orders for sale of both properties and drafted a Tomlin Order which was approved by the Court.

L v L

Practice Area: Family – Financial Remedy Proceedings

Claire Athis, representing the Husband in Financial Remedy proceedings, secured the dismissal of all the Wife's claims by showing the Wife should be held to a previous agreement, under which the Husband had already paid out a lump sum, against his solicitor's advice. The previous agreement was approved by the court as the Final Order.

CS v DP

Practice Area: Family – Private Children Act Proceedings

Representing the Respondent father following a six year relationship, and defending him within a Finding of Fact Hearing against significant allegations of domestic abuse (all his contact with the child being supervised at a contact centre), Claire secured an outcome whereby no findings were made against her client; the court made adverse findings of fact against the Mother and immediately ordered unsupervised weekly contact with the father.

W v W

Practice Area: Family – Private Children Act Proceedings

Representing the Applicant Wife at Financial Dispute Resolution, after a relatively short marriage with no children and where there were significant assets in a foreign jurisdiction, Claire negotiated a final settlement by way of lump sum payment for the Wife which represented a 375% increase from the Husband's opening position.

C v B

Practice Area: Family – Domestic Abuse and Children Proceedings

Claire represented a 21 year old father who had been accused of violent behaviour by his ex-partner (Litigant in person) and denied any contact with his young child. Taking over the case part way through, Claire advised issue of father's own Non-molestation and Children's Act applications. The Family Law Act applications were dealt with through cross-understandings and supervised contact started immediately. Claire represented through to Final Hearing of the Child Arrangements application where an Order for extensive unsupervised contact was agreed by consent.

DH v CG

Practice Area: Family - Children Act Proceedings

Representing the Respondent full time carer mother where a previously abusive father had applied for shared care and, having undertaken some targeted domestic abuse work, secured the recommendation of the Children in Need social worker for his application. Claire challenged the social worker's conclusions at Final Hearing through cross examination and submissions and persuaded the Court to reject her proposal and make a Child Arrangements order which provided the Respondent mother with a 'lives with' order and protected her primary care role by allocating her the significant majority of the time spent with the child.

HD v WB

Practice Area: Family - Children Act Proceedings

Representing the Respondent father, Claire made a successful application to the court for disclosure of the child's medical records in the face of allegations by the Applicant mother that contact with Claire's client was causing psychological harm. These allegations were then withdrawn and a final order secured for regular unrestricted contact with the father.

SJ v HF

Practice Area: Family Law Act Proceedings

Claire represented the Respondent at Final Hearing, securing the dismissal of both an application to commit her client to prison for breach of undertakings already given and an application for a non-molestation order.

What the Directories say

You're a star! Thanks so much for your email and guidance.

Instructing Solicitor - Frodshams

I'm not sure who is more delighted at this outcome – me or the client! She has already telephoned me in tears to express her gratitude. Thank you so much for your hard work and expertise in achieving this, your skeleton argument was brilliant!

Instructing Solicitor - KBL Solicitors

Thank you for engaging so productively with our client, he is truly grateful. We are also grateful that we were able to instruct [Claire instructed for Financial Remedy Final Hearing] who was able to see the big picture and allow our client to narrow the issues and reach a position in which he was able to agree terms. Once again thank you for your professionalism and the support you provided our client on what was a stressful day for all concerned.

Instructing Solicitor - Hill and Company

I am extremely grateful for your hard work on this case and the result achieved for our client. Thank you so much and it is really appreciated.

Instructing Solicitor - Harvey Roberts

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