

JOHN THORNTON

Year called 2002

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OVERVIEW

John is described in the 2024 Legal 500 as “a strong advocate who has a no-nonsense approach”. He has extensive experience in both public and private law children’s cases, he is regularly instructed by solicitors for parents and Children’s Guardians. He has been involved in several media interest cases.

John specialises in representing parents, wider family members and intervenors in complex public law proceedings and multi-day fact-finding hearings. His case load includes the particularly vulnerable, along with those facing the most serious of allegations such as physical and sexual abuse, non-accidental injury, factitious illness, and cases involving child fatality. He is described in the legal 500 as having a “blunt style that is powerful and effective”.

John regularly represents parents in all aspects of private law children cases including complex fact-finding hearings, alienating behaviours, relocation, domestic abuse, and intractable contact disputes. He represents children via rule 16:4 appointed Guardians. He has been described in the Legal 500 as “Pragmatic, forthright and intelligent”.

John will accept instructions through Direct Public Access and has developed a website to assist members of public with access to justice (www.barristerfamilylaw.co.uk).

John is a qualified child Arbitrator and member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

PRACTICE AREAS

Public Law Children

Private Law Children

Finance and Private Client

EXPERIENCE

John's early years of practice at the bar were a mixture of criminal and family law. During this time, he developed extensive experience of trial advocacy in the Crown Court both prosecuting and defending a wide range of offences including the most serious violent and sexual offences.

He has practiced exclusively in family law since 2009 and has built on these strong foundations to offer a forensic analysis of complex factual scenarios whilst combining this with robust cross-examination and clear case strategy. He is regularly instructed in fact-finding hearings and has been successful on several occasions in persuading the court that an expert has 'overreached', 'provided inadequate analysis' or that the evidence was 'finely balanced' and pointed away from the expert opinion.

He has worked with King's Counsel on complex matters in the High Court including representing a member of the Roma community in a four-week fact-finding and subsequent rehearing which involved allegation of child trafficking, rape and the supply of illegal drugs. He has also worked with King's Counsel in representing a teenage mother where the father had murdered their child and has acted on behalf of the child in parental homicide cases.

Outside of work John is connected to the Kent Law School at Kent University. He recently Judged at the National Law Student Triathlon involving Universities from across the country. He is regularly involved in supporting law students to develop their advocacy skills through mootings and competitions.

TESTIMONIALS

"A strong advocate who has a no-nonsense approach. He is particularly strong at representing fathers accused of posing a significant risk. His blunt style is powerful and effective." **Legal 500, 2024 Ranked: Tier 6**

"Very experienced in public and private child law." **Legal 500, 2019**

"Pragmatic, Forthright and Intelligent." **Legal 500 2018**

"I have to say the John is masterful at his craft, a very professional individual, highly knowledgeable and his attention to detail is TOP NOTCH."

He is very honest in his assessments, his approach to his clients is not only professional but also very diligent. When I came across John's profile online, I instantly knew he could be the perfect representative to take my case forward, but when I met him in person, he gave reassurance in my choice. John has an impeccable approach to his work and has the best interest for his clients. He goes a step beyond his duties to make sure his clients are well taken care of. I highly recommend John to anyone who is having family matters at court that require someone who is pragmatic, caring, honest, knowledgeable, and very astute in his profession. Thank you, John, for your work." **Mr E Rivers, Public Access (March 2024)**

"I cannot recommend John Thornton highly enough. His knowledge, expertise, experience and honesty enables him to successfully navigate a clear path through even the most complex and arduous of cases. I was lucky enough to instruct John on a public access basis. He was able to join my case towards the end of proceedings and with his ability to understand my case rapidly, digest the necessary facts and filter the documentation he successfully protected my children.

He is highly skilled in the documentation that he submits to the court. It is precise, factual and demonstrates his extensive knowledge, thus giving the Court a clear direction and basis for decision making. John is both reassuring as well as honest, he quickly instils a sense of trust which is exactly what I needed when walking into this particular hearing. Again, his authority and knowledge of family court law gave me confidence and security, which is often hard in proceedings where you are trying to protect your children. John's calm, compassionate but focused manner enabled me to feel at ease when discussing my Case with him. John brought clarity and sense to my complex case which also supported the Judge as he too looked to John during this hearing. Don't hesitate to contact him if you are embarking on a journey with the Family Courts." **Ms Chapman, Public Access (December 2023)**

"Thank you for your help and guidance. It's difficult to put into words what you have helped me achieve. Thank you for helping bring my family together." **Mr Ogunyomi, Private Client (October 2023)**

"I hope you don't mind me emailing you direct, I just wanted to thank you for your efforts on my court case. You were absolutely superb and delivered my case perfectly. Needless to say, I am over the moon with the result." **Mr. J DaCosta, Private Client**

"Thank you, John Thornton for helping me achieve a successful outcome at my hearing. I found you very professional and easy to talk too about my circumstances. I felt reassured and extremely impressed with the way you dealt with my case. I would not hesitate to recommend your services to anyone." **Ms. K Newing, Public Access**

"I have been very impressed with your attention to detail, pragmatic attitude and your willingness to go above and beyond what was expected of you, to ensure a successful outcome on the day. I found your direct access approach very reassuring, and I will have no hesitation in retaining your services again." **Mr X, Public Access**

"Thank you, John, for helping me achieve a very unexpected and satisfactory outcome whilst dealing with the Court Hearing this week. As someone who, out of financial necessity, was forced to litigate in person during what had become a long drawn out and contentious financial settlement dispute, I was relieved to have someone with your knowledge, skills and confidence represent me. Your direct and down to Earth approach was refreshing and reassuring, and you managed to make complex legal issues easy to understand. I will not hesitate to recommend you to anyone in need of your services." **Mr G Lewis, Public Access**

“John was professional, knowledgeable but friendly throughout my case and I can't recommend him highly enough. His calmness in the court helped keep the case on track through a very tumultuous time for me and I couldn't have done it without him. Thanks John!” Mr S Harlow, Public Access.

PUBLICATIONS AND LEGAL UPDATES

Jonathan has created a website to assist litigants in person whilst enhancing my online profile in relation to Public Access: www.barristerfamilylaw.co.uk.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

BA (hons) Law & Criminology (2:1)

Bar Vocational Course (Nottingham)

Association of Lawyers for Children

Family Law Bar Association

The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn

Liberty

REPORTED CASES

KCC v C [2022] EWFC (forthcoming)

O v B-M [2019] EWFC B23 (16 February 2019)

KCC v A & Ors (Progress by adults with large family over 12 months. Finely balanced departure from experts' opinions) [2017] EWFC B95

KCC v D & Ors (5) (Re-hearing) [2015] EWFC 96

KCC v D & Ors (4) (Re W) [2015] EWFC 94

KCC v D & Ors (3) (Application for Re-Hearing) [2015] EWFC 94

KCC v D & Ors (2) (Fact Finding) [2015] EWFC 93

KCC v D & Ors [2014] EWFC 59