

WESTGATE CHAMBERS

Maria Hancock CIArb

Barrister



'Maria is everything I want when I instruct Counsel. Her legal knowledge is unrivalled. Her conduct with clients and other legal professionals is unmatched. She will fight hard for her clients, and she puts them at the centre of everything she does, so very well.'

A senior junior and experienced leading junior, who regularly appears alongside Queens Counsel.

Maria quickly inspires confidence in professional and lay clients with her thorough knowledge of relevant law and procedure, excellent oral and written advocacy and calm but authoritative manner. At the same time as being an effective advocate, Maria is extremely approachable.

Care Proceedings

She undertakes the most serious of Children and Family law work predominantly focussing on complex medical issues in cases involving the death of infants and children, allegations of serious NAI, FII/Perplexing Presentation and severe emotional harm and neglect. She appears at all Court levels both with and without a leader, often alongside silks, and represents all parties.

Recent and current examples include: two separate sets of High Court proceedings involving the death of babies from asphyxiation (representing F in the first and M in the second, with Maria successfully persuading the Courts that her clients were not involved in the deaths), the gravest of child sexual abuse including anal rape (F), serious and life-limiting head injuries to a baby (F) and multi-faceted illnesses and medical conditions fabricated and induced in a child (M). Others include intra-familial sexual abuse (representing the children), serious physical abuse including punishment by fire and heat (M), FGM proceedings (M) and NAI proceedings involving multiple fractures to children.

Year of Call: 1995

Core Practice Areas:

Family, Care Proceedings, Private Law,
Children's Arbitration, Inquests

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Children's Arbitration

Maria is also a trained Children Arbitrator. Her skills are utilised to bring proceedings to an efficient conclusion, without parties having to deal with the large backlog the Court service are presently dealing with.

Private Law/Child Arrangements

Maria also has an expertise and recent experience of international relocation cases, international child abduction proceedings, including applications pursuant to Art 11(7) Brussels II A, matters which have difficult jurisdictional issues and cases involving children with gender dysphoria. She is also experienced in Judicial Review and HRA applications arising out of Children Act proceedings.

Inquests

Her experience and interest in cases involving the death of children has led her into Inquest work, where she represents any potential Interested Person, including but not limited to, Local Authorities and bereaved families in standard and Article 2 Inquests, with multiple experts, lay and professional witnesses.

Achievements, appointments and memberships

- FLBA/ICCA trained in cross examination of vulnerable witnesses
- FLBA (Former Kent and Sussex Committee member, including terms as Chair)
- Children Arbitrator. CIArb member

- Chambers Trust Committee member
- Deputy Head of Chambers (Family and Civil)
- Pupil Supervisor
- Certificate of Qualification in Social Work

Family barrister Maria Hancock's most notable cases include:

H v B (Enforcement of Domestic Return Order) [2020] EWHC 961 (Fam)

Re F (Child) (International Relocation Cases) [2015] EWCA Civ 882

Re A and B (Children: Brussels II Revised: Article 15) [2014] EWHC 3516

A County Council v M & Ors (Foreign Adoption) [2013] 1FLR 88

A County Council v M & Ors (RRO Artificial Insemination) [2013] 2 FLR 1270

Re W (2021) represented M in DOLS proceedings (High Court)

Re W (2021) represented Child in serious NAI proceedings

Re T (2021) successfully argued No Direct Contact in Wardship proceedings (High Court)

RE M (2021) represented Child in FGM proceedings (High Court)

Re A (2021) represented Child in International Child Abduction proceedings (High Court)

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Re B (2020) successfully argued that M not responsible for multiple fractures to baby

Re H (2020) successful exoneration of M in proceedings following death of baby (High Court)

Re M (2018) – successful exoneration of F in proceedings following death of baby (High Court)

Re AA (2018) – successful proving of all D/A allegations, including rape of M – children returned

Re M (2018) represented children in intra-familial sexual abuse case

Re B (2017) represented M in FII proceedings

Family barrister Maria Hancock's most notable cases include:

Re K (2017) represented M found to have inflicted, jointly with F, 28 fractures on baby (received 8 years imprisonment in criminal court subsequently)

Re G (2016) successful defence of Hague Convention Child Abduction proceedings (High Court)

Re K (2016) represented F found to have sexually abused children (received 18 years imprisonment in criminal court subsequently) (High Court)