

# SUSANNAH JOHNSON

Year of call  
1996



Susannah Johnson is a highly experienced barrister who specialises in family work involving children, civil cases arising from sexual and physical abuse, and public inquiry work. Susannah also undertakes Court of Protection work.

As well as being noted for her legal ability and impressive advocacy, Susannah is known for her sound judgment and sensitive approach towards vulnerable litigants and clients.

Susannah is qualified to accept instructions directly from clients and is registered under the Bar Council's Public Access Scheme, meaning that members of the public who seek specialist advice can come direct to her. In addition, she welcomes instructions from solicitors, in-house law departments, qualified foreign lawyers, and clients licensed by the Bar Council to give instructions direct to barristers under the Bar Council's Licensed Access Scheme. For more information please visit our Direct Access page [here](#).

## LEGAL EXPERTISE

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### Family Law

Susannah is a highly experienced advocate who regularly appears in the High Court in complex public and private law cases. She acts for parents, guardians and local authorities and acts for parents in international child abduction cases. Susannah also has experience in forced marriage and Court of Protection cases. She has attracted positive comment on her advocacy skills from both clients and the judiciary.

Susannah is a contributor to Family Law Journal and to chambers run seminars and events, giving talks on areas of topical interest.

## Selected Cases

### [A Local authority v DD \(2023\)](#)

Leading junior in care proceedings concerning allegations against two parents of a young baby who suffered multiple rib fractures and serious head injuries, including brain damage, in their care. Local Authority case was that one, other or both parents had caused the injuries; had colluded to conceal what had really happened and had neglected to seek medical care in a timely manner. Susannah's client was found not to have injured the baby.

### [A Local Authority v XX \(2023\)](#)

Representing children in care proceedings in the High Court whose father had murdered their mother while the children were present. Case involved parallel criminal proceedings, litigant in person and application for termination of parental responsibility.

### [A Local Authority v AA and Other \[2022\] EWHC 2321 \(Fam\)](#)

Junior counsel acting for a father in care proceedings where client alleged to have inflicted serious non-accidental head injuries on baby who he claimed had fallen from the bed with complex medical evidence and possibility of rare medical condition affecting causation. Judge found LA had not met the required standard of proof and the parents were able to resume caring for their baby on an unsupervised basis.

### [A Local Authority v BB \(2021\)](#)

Care proceedings, led. Representing main carer parent alleged to have harmed child due to fabricated and induced illness ("FII"). The subject child, who was close to secondary school age at the time proceedings were issued, was unable to walk and used a wheelchair. Susannah acted in the fact-finding hearing and the final hearing that followed.

### [A Local Authority v CC \(2021\)](#)

Care proceedings, representing mother who objected to and was obstructing life-saving treatment for her young child who had leukaemia. Client had significant communication difficulties and required both an interpreter and intermediary due to first language not being English and due to a learning difficulty. Client was highly resistant to Western medicine and treatment methods and required a high level of support to provide instructions, understand advice and follow the proceedings and respective roles of the parties. This case required a very careful balance of support and advocacy on behalf of a very vulnerable client.

### [Gloucestershire CC v F \(2019\)](#)

Instructed by the local authority in a case involving multiple fractures to a very young baby with a rare genetic condition and complex causation issues.

## London Borough of Enfield v K & S (2019)

Representation of a father in care proceedings concerning allegations of life threatening non-accidental injury to a child and domestic violence.

## London Borough of Enfield v A (2018)

Representation of a child in the High Court in care and inherent jurisdiction proceedings concerning parental refusal to allow blood transfusion.

## M v L (2017)

Representation of a child in private law High Court proceedings concerning international child abduction, conflict of jurisdiction and residence.

## London Borough of Enfield v T (2016)

Representation of a parent in Care proceedings involving allegations of physical and psychological abuse and proposal for international special guardianship arrangement.

## London Borough of Islington v G & D (2014)

Representation of parent in care proceedings involving proposal for international adoption of subject child.

## London Borough of Newham v J (2013)

Representation of parent in care proceedings involving international trafficking and sexual exploitation.

## Hertfordshire County Council v G (2012)

Representation of parent with learning difficulties concerning allegations of serious non-accidental injury and neglect.

## London Borough of Tower Hamlets v M (2010)

High Court wardship proceedings. Representation of child after attempted murder of baby by parent.

## Personal Injury

Susannah specialises in claimant personal injury work based on recent and non-recent sexual and physical abuse in institutional settings such as schools, places of detention and care homes and in the context of the care system. Susannah has also been instructed on behalf of defendants where her knowledge of the family jurisdiction and practice was required.

Susannah is frequently instructed on behalf of individuals who have suffered abuse as children at the hands of

carers and teachers; and claimants in group actions based on negligence and vicarious liability against the Ministry of Justice, local authorities, organs of the Catholic Church and other religious organisations in relation to institutions including:

- Medomsley Detention Centre; and
- St William's Children's Home

Susannah set up and is head of the Claimant Child Abuse group at 7BR. As a highly experienced former criminal practitioner and specialised rape prosecutor Susannah is used to dealing with the difficulties often encountered in sexual abuse cases and in advising on matters of disclosure, public interest immunity and privilege.

Susannah is regarded as a highly skilled advocate with a sensitive approach to cases and as someone that clients find open and easy to talk to about difficult and distressing matters.

## Selected Cases

### [Various v The Catholic Child Welfare Society \(Diocese of Middlesbrough\) \(1\) & The Trustees of the Middlesbrough Diocesan Rescue Society \(2\) \(St William's litigation\) \(2009-2018\)](#)

Group action involving widespread historical, sexual and physical abuse.

### [Various v The Ministry of Justice \(2009, 2012, 2014\)](#)

Serious sexual and physical abuse of young men held at Medomsley Detention Centre, County Durham. Multiple cases settled in claimants' favour. The abuse is currently the subject of an investigation by Durham Police.

### [P v A County Council \(2014\)](#)

Historical allegations of physical and sexual abuse and unlawful administration of medication by psychiatrist in a children's home; negligence and vicarious liability alleged against local authority. Claim settled in Claimant's favour.

### [E v Birmingham City Council \(2013\)](#)

Allegations of historic sexual and physical abuse and negligence by the local authority settled in favour of Claimant.

### [P v A City Council \(2013\)](#)

Recent allegations of sexual abuse by a teacher for which employers were vicariously liable and negligence by local authority in failing to carry out proper statutory checks. Claim settled in Claimant's favour.

## Public Inquiries

Susannah undertakes public inquiry work and is renowned for her sound judgment and sensitive approach. She recently represented 28 Core Participants, instructed by Switalskis Solicitors, in the Lambeth investigation within the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA).

Susannah is currently instructed as junior counsel to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

## Modern Slavery

Susannah is regularly instructed on behalf of ATLEU to advise and represent clients who have been trafficked into this jurisdiction for the purpose of domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and sham marriage; and who have suffered physical and sexual abuse, resulting in psychiatric and/or psychological damage. She has particular expertise in representing vulnerable clients who require additional support and have communication difficulties.

Susannah also acts for and advises clients when the Local Authority is considering or seeking removal of a child born to a parent who has been trafficked into this jurisdiction.

Susannah has delivered training in chambers on the personal injury aspects of modern slavery cases.

## Memberships

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- Association of Child Abuse Lawyers
- Family Law Bar Association
- Personal Injury Bar Association