

Shona Upton

Shona has been a family law specialist in public law children work for the entirety of her career at the Bar. She is the current Head of the Family Group at Dere Street Barristers.

Shona has extensive experience across the broad spectrum of family court work in both the Family Court and High Court (Family Division). She has a particular interest in cases involving allegations of non-accidental injury, sex abuse, significant chronic neglect and serious emotional harm. She is frequently instructed to represent Local Authorities, Parents, Children's Guardians, extended family members and intervenors.



Regarded as an extremely skilful, considered and persuasive advocate, both orally and in her written argument. Shona is approachable, pragmatic and straightforward in her advice to her clients, both lay and professional. She is, without exception, well prepared and highly effective both in and outside of the Court room and highly regarded for her outstanding client care.

LEADING JUNIOR

Legal500

UNITED KINGDOM

2026

YEAR OF CALL

2007

AREAS OF PRACTICE

FAMILY

Public Law – Children

Shona Upton

NOTABLE CASES

Re: I (2024)

Representation of the Local Authority in proceedings concerning allegations of significant physical and emotional abuse by the children. The fact-find resolved in the face of overwhelming evidence, meticulously gathered and presented on behalf of the local authority.

Re: F (2024)

Representing the child in the High Court before Poole J in a case concerning placement of a child with positively assessed family members in a non-hague convention country. The placement plan was contested by the negatively assessed UK based family members. [Judgment](#)

Re B: (2024)

Representing a Mother in a fact-finding in proceedings concerning significant injuries to her 6 week old baby.

Re: B (2023)

Led by Junior Counsel for the Local Authority in a complex case listed for a four week fact-find involving allegations of the emotional and physical abuse, neglect, deliberate infliction of serious and torturous injury and the subsequent death of a child. The medial evidence in the case was complex. Shona as the Local Authority Junior was responsible for examining and presenting to the Court in excess of 100,000 pages of mobile phone telephone evidence. Much of the identified material was highly relevant to a number of the Court findings. The case also involved complex issues concerning assessment and placement of the surviving siblings in a non-hague convention country.

Re F (2023)

Representing and then subsequently led in a case for a Local Authority in proceedings which concerned complex medical evidence in respect of serious and complex head injuries to a young baby.

Re L (2023)

Representing a Local Authority in proceedings concerning extremely significant and chronic neglect and emotional abuse which had taken place over a period exceeding 10 years. In excess of 10 medical and education professionals gave oral evidence as part of the proceedings.

Re: B (2023)

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Recommendations and Client Feedback

The Legal 500 2026

'Shona is always meticulously prepared, she goes above and beyond to ensure she fully understands all aspects of the case and researches thoroughly, and she is a fearless advocate who can make clear and concise submissions on complex areas of law. Shona is able to assist clients in understanding difficult issues and is pragmatic and realistic with her advice, and she is also very proactive and provides regular updates to those who instruct her.

Memberships

Departmental Honours, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2005

Bar Vocational Course Prize, Inner Temple, 2007

Qualifications

BA (Hons) Politics (2005) University of Newcastle upon Tyne (2:1)

Graduate Diploma in Law (2006) University of Northumbria (Commendation)

Bar Vocational Course (2007) University of Northumbria (Outstanding)



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