



**Marie Crawford**

Date of Call: 1992 (Lincolns Inn)

Qualifications: LLB (Hons) Law (Leeds University)

Memberships: Family Law Bar Association; Sussex Family Law Bar Association; South Eastern Circuit; Sussex Bar Mess; Committee Member Sussex and Kent Family Law Bar Association

Direct Access Qualified

**Marie is a highly regarded specialist in Public Law (Children) with many years' experience of representing parents and children at all stages of proceedings and all levels of court. She also represents children through their Guardians in cases involving 16.4 Guardians (a children's Guardian appointed by the court to give an independent view). Although now focussing solely on public law children matters, she has previously practised across all aspects of family law.**

This broad and extensive experience of matters relating to family relationships has given Marie deep insights into the issues which arise, and the emotional as well as the practical impacts which they have.

She is very approachable; empathetic towards her clients and their situation. Marie fully understands how distressing the circumstances often are, and her role is to support her client's interests, whilst always also keeping the best interests of the child/ren involved at the centre of everything.

Her clients are frequently vulnerable themselves, and she is experienced at supporting vulnerable people who have mental health issues, issues relating to substance misuse, or who are victims of abuse.

Marie is able to be supportive whilst also remaining objective. She is able to consider the wider issues of the case and their emotional and practical impact, alongside the legal issues, and take all of those factors into consideration when advising her clients.

### **Children – Public Law**

Marie is regularly instructed to represent children's parents and guardians in Care and Adoption proceedings. This has often included cases where the most serious harm to children is alleged, such as multiple injuries, sexual abuse, and fabricated or induced illnesses (FII). Many of these cases have involved parents who are also facing criminal prosecution as a result of these allegations.

She frequently works with clients where the circumstances include parents struggling with addiction and other mental health issues, learning difficulties, domestic abuse, or often simply poverty;



including those with impoverished backgrounds themselves – leading to lack of life chances and, in particular, lack of positive parenting role-models.

Her empathetic approach enables her to help her clients through each step of the legal process and ensure that they get sensitive but robust representation in Court.

She aims to reassure her clients that she is not here to judge them for the actions or decisions that have led them to the situations they are facing – her job is to put forward the legal aspects of their case and to support them through the court process to obtain a result which is in the best interests of the child.

As well as representing children, parents and 16.4 guardians, Marie regularly represents grandparents or other family members in applications for a Special Guardianship Order to secure the future of a child or children in their care. This also includes situations where professionals have recommended the child should continue in their care for the remainder of their childhood. These applications are often made within Public and Private Law applications but are more frequently being made as freestanding applications.

#### Private Law Children – 16.4

Marie regularly acts in private law cases which have become so complex that a Guardian is appointed by the court to act for the child/ren and for them to be separately legally represented as a party to proceedings. In these cases she acts for the child/ren through their Guardian.

These cases tend to be high conflict and part of protracted court proceedings. They often involve allegations of serious harm and allegations of alienating behaviours by one parent against the other.

In these cases Marie aims to assist the parties to see matters from the child/ren's perspective and act in their best interests, become more cooperative parents, reduce the conflict between them, and obtain a result which is in the best interests of the child.

#### Testimonials

*"I just wanted to say a huge thank you, from the moment you came aboard the case, you turned everything around and I truly believe that if it wasn't for your hard work ... I wouldn't have got the result I did. So from me and my children thank you so much."*