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1KBW Public Law Month

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WEEK THREE

1kbw.co.uk — Leading in family law

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Martha is an experienced child law specialist, covering both public and private law. She represents parents, Local Authorities and Guardians at all levels of court and undertakes Direct Access work.

For the first five years of practice, she also undertook criminal work and feels that the cross examination and witness handling techniques she learnt then gave her a good grounding for her family work; she has further trained as a mediator and collaborative lawyer and so brings strong client handling and negotiation skills to her cases.

Reflections on risk assessments in light of the final report on '*Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children cases*'

Introduction

In June 2020 the final report of an expert panel was completed by Professor Rosemary Hunter, University of Kent, Professor Mandy Burton from the University of Leicester and Professor Liz Trinder from the University of Exeter. This followed a call for evidence that had led to over 1,200 responses from individuals and organisations across England and Wales, together with round tables and focus groups with professionals, parents and children with experience of the family courts.

The report was commissioned by the Ministry if Justice to look at how effectively the family courts identify and respond to allegations of domestic abuse and other serious offences in the context of private family law proceedings. However, a lot of the material gathered and the recommendations that the report makes about the processes and outcomes for parties and children involved in the family court system have wider implications for those of us working in the public law context too.

The report details deep-seated and systemic issues that were found to affect the ways in which risk to children and adults is identified and managed.

The report identifies key themes that run throughout the various areas of discussion:

- Resource Constraints
- A Pro-Contact Culture
- Working in Silos
- An adversarial system

The report concludes that although there are some good practices and widespread good intentions, there is a lack of understanding of the different forms that domestic abuse takes and the ongoing impact that abuse has. They felt there is a systematic minimisation or disbelief and acceptance of counter allegations without robust scrutiny.

This is a lengthy and in-depth report and this talk will not attempt to cover all the issues and recommendations and will instead focus on a few key themes that I think are useful for us to reflect upon.

Pro-Contact Culture

This is a theme that underpins much of the report; that there is a pro-contact culture in operation in private law children applications which undermines the effective working of PD12J.

This stems from a presumption of parental involvement and an emphasis on children having a relationship with both of their parents, often, it was felt without sufficient consideration as to the risks that this approach could pose.

There is no automatic right to contact between a child and parent. However, s1(2A) of the Children Act does require the court to presume that the involvement of each parent in the child's life will further the child's welfare, unless there is evidence to suggest that the involvement of that parent in the child's life would put the child at risk of suffering harm. Even before the statutory presumption was introduced in 2014, case law had already firmly established that the involvement of both parents in a child's life will usually further the child's welfare. The suggestion from this report is that the

statutory presumption has caused the pendulum to swing too far in favour of contact and that this does not support the cautious approach put forward within PD12J in cases where domestic abuse has been alleged.

File based research indicates that over the 10 years before 2017, indirect contact and no contact orders were only made in around 10% of cases involving allegations of domestic abuse.[i] Domestic abuse was generally considered as simply one factor out of many when looking at contact. 7% of cases involved child sexual abuse. 92% of cases ended with orders for unsupervised contact and fewer than 1% with no contact. Only about 2% of cases lead to a DAPP referral from CAFCASS.

These figures suggest that, in practice, substantial numbers of abusive parents obtain orders for contact without being asked to do anything to address their behaviour. There is a marked contrast between the willingness of the courts to direct parents to attend activities to support contact and co-parenting (SPIP) and the limited use of interventions to address abusive behaviour.

When court orders are made:

- direct contact is still likely to be ordered,
- There is an emphasis on contact progressing,
- promotion of co-parenting regardless of circumstances,
- dependence on the court discouraged

Mothers described continuing abuse, control and suffering in connection with contact orders. Some reported that the abuse had worsened and they considered their children to be in greater danger after family court proceedings.

In contrast, there is a perception amongst professionals that mothers make false allegations of domestic abuse as part of a game playing exercise to delay or frustrate contact. However, research suggests these numbers are very small. The reality is that there are still a number of barriers operating to dissuade victims from reporting abuse and there are likely to be far higher levels of domestic abuse than we think.

The report writers feel that the dominance of contact means that other welfare considerations are being excluded, including the need to protect children from abuse and take account of the child's wishes and feelings.

The report writers referenced some particular ideas/concepts that are used in family proceedings that form part of the pro-contact culture:

Reframing abuse as a high conflict relationship – the report highlights the tendency to talk about high conflict relationships, where both parties are 'blamed' and that although this may sometimes be accurate, we should be careful to thoroughly distinguish this from relationships involving domestic abuse of one party by the other. Victims and professionals told the panel that they had experiences of domestic abuse being reframed into evidence of a high conflict, mutually abusive relationship, for which the solution was considered to be mutual reduction of conflict and encouragement of co-operation rather than protection of the child and adult victim from the other parents' abuse.

Parental alienation – there was a perception that there is a lower threshold for raising allegations of parental alienation than there is for raising domestic abuse or child sexual abuse.

Cases where children have been emotionally abused by a parent who has made false allegations of abuse against the other parent are small in number in comparison to the large numbers of cases where mothers fear false allegations of parental alienation. There is a disparity between courts allowing expert evidence on parental alienation but not on domestic abuse. Indications are that mothers and support organisations see the court's approach as sexist and discriminatory.

The only study to date of contact enforcement cases found that implacably hostile mothers appeared in only a very small minority of cases (4%) whilst 1/3 cases involved current risk and safety issues relating to domestic abuse and/or child abuse. The same study found that courts 'misread' almost half of the risk cases as involving mutual conflict or implacable hostility and consequently managed safeguarding risks inadequately, resulting in inappropriate interventions and further unsafe contact orders. This was attributed to the courts' pro-contact culture. [ii]

The strong association between claims of alienation and domestic abuse allegations and the weight of the research evidence and submissions suggest that accusations of parental alienation are often used to threaten and blame victims of domestic abuse who are attempting to protect their children and achieve safer contact arrangements.

This links to another key theme In the report:

The voice of the child

The pro-contact culture leads to children's voices going unheard in domestic abuse cases. Two specific factors are highlighted:

- The court decides that it already knows what children need and so don't need to be heard from
- Children's wishes and feelings were not elicited or were heard only if they expressed a wish for contact.

Some respondents to the call for evidence argued that there is a presumption that the parental rights of the father override the wishes and feelings of the child. There was a concern raised that CAFCASS and social workers regard it as their role to persuade the child to agree to contact.

The increasing use of the term parental alienation could silence children as their wishes and feelings are seen as contaminated. The protective parent can then be seen instead as an alienator. This leaves children who have experienced domestic abuse in a very vulnerable position. There is concern expressed in the report that the family court system is prioritising the risk of parental alienation of the father over the impact of the domestic abuse on the wellbeing of the survivor and their children.

There can be an assumption of parental alienation when a child does not want contact with an abuser rather than as a result of that abuse. Listening more carefully to the child may result in a better understanding of whether or not allegations of alienation have any merit. However, as a result of resource constraints, it is often the case that the children's wishes and feelings are not canvassed at all.

The accusation of Parental Alienation has become a common counter allegation. Submissions highlighted the very real dangers of accepting this as the default explanation for children not wanting contact. Perpetrators often minimise abuse, justify themselves by blaming the victim and blame the child's reluctance to have contact on the mother's influence rather than seeing it as a consequence of their own behaviour.

Research suggests that children want to be consulted and that their voices should not be dismissed as simply reflecting the views of the resident parent. Skilled assessments required that start with an open mind, rather than a fixed hypothesis of what is going on which may lead to entirely inappropriate conclusions. We need to assess all the circumstances of an individual case to help the court determine what is in a child's best interests.

Voices of children go unheard or are often muted where domestic abuse is raised whilst the court is caught up with a process of fact finding and cost saving. This means that a large proportion of children have no direct involvement in the court process. [iii]

Research studies have shown a pattern of selective listening where CAFCASS and the courts react positively when children express a wish to spend time with a parent, but treat those who do not as problematic and obstructive, even when they expressed fear of the parent is due to experiences of violence or abuse. CAFCASS officers make considerable efforts to persuade children to spend time with a parent, or to increase the amount of time they are spending with them but not. Time listening to why children are opposed to seeing a parents. Result is that children's experience of abuse can be ignored, dismissed or minimised. Younger children were particularly likely to have their wishes and feelings overridden if they did not want to spend time with an abusive parent.

A major issue is of course resources. Professionals have limited time to spend with children, there is insufficient opportunity to form a rapport and there is a lack of follow up when orders are made. This all leads to a greater risk of the child's wishes and feelings being sidelined, minimised or children feeling uncomfortable or removed from the process and not expressing their views properly or at all. One suggestion is for courts to engage better with organisations that have established strong relationships with a child who may have greater depth of knowledge of individual circumstances. It is emphasised that properly presenting the child's views requires time and skill.

One particularly difficult area is around allegations of sexual abuse. Children are often unwilling to disclose sexual abuse to independent third parties but if the disclosure was only to the non-abusive parent this was not believed. There is a particular issue around survivors of child sexual abuse disclosing concerns due to previous experiences of being disbelieved.

The impact on children of being forced to go to contact with someone that they have been abused by is emphasised in the report. It is harmful to place children in a situation where they do not feel safe, it is harmful and disempowering for children not to feel heard and for their views to be disregarded and children receive a confusing message – they are taught about the importance of recognising and reporting abusive behaviour, but then that they must put up with abusive behaviour by one of their parents. Children are often deprived of their key source of resilience against the effects of abuse – support from the protective parent. Children may not dare speak to their mother about what has happened during contact because it could be used against her in court to demonstrate implacable hostility or alienation and that leaves children feeling isolated.

Not listening to the voice of the child gave the sense of children feeling undermined and let down and left with a severe distrust of authorities Children are being left unable to understand why they are being made to spread time with someone who had abused them or the other parent. This can also undermine the quality of the court's decision making and result in orders that do not promote the child's welfare.

Difficulties with evidencing abuse

Silo Working

The report notes that abuse accepted in one system may not but be in another. It was highlighted that there remained real issues of communication between different branches of the legal system – between the criminal and family courts and between Local Authorities dealing with public law and the private law family system and CAFCASS.

Different parts of the system adopt different approaches, which leads to inconsistent assessment of risk. Different areas did not always share information and could reach conflicting and contradictory decisions.

For example:

- a high risk assessment by MARAC could be ignored in the private law context.
- Parents reported that social care threatened care proceedings and then supported the abusing parent having contact.
- Direct handovers were set up despite non-molestation order restrictions.

The report writers felt that available evidence of abuse and the impact it has on children is ignored by family courts and risk assessment processes fail to consider indicators and assessment of risk that have been made elsewhere. The life threatening dangers of poor communication and lack of information sharing between agencies is repeatedly emphasised in child safeguarding reviews and domestic homicide reviews, however, the evidence gathered by the expert panel suggested this remained an issue.

Additionally, there are barriers to victims from some backgrounds raising domestic abuse – BAME, male victims; there is a stereotypical idea of 'victim' in domestic abuse and for those who do not fit well with those stereotypes and navigating the system and achieving justice is more problematic.

The reporter identified deep-seated systemic problems with how family courts identify, assess and manage risk to children and adults.

Stereotyping

The report highlights that the assessment of risk in domestic abuse cases is being hampered by the persistence of stereotypes that we all need to be alert to and keep in mind when looking at a case where domestic abuse has been raised as an issue.

The criminal justice system has concentrated on single incidents of physical abuse and is not as responsive to other forms of abuse. This is also perpetuated in the family courts. There is often a focus in fact finding hearings on physical abuse as something that is more tangible and easier to evidence. More attention Is given to recent incident, which links to a lack of understanding of domestic abuse and particularly coercive control. Victims commonly say worst type of abuse is ongoing psychological and emotional abuse, coercion and control. Protection for the non-abusive parent tends to focus on their physical safety and does not extend to freedom from ongoing coercive control or harm to their emotional wellbeing.

'S/he didn't report anything to the police' – victims may not appreciate the importance of raising allegations early and face criticism of their credibility when allegations are raised late. Women often

do not fully appreciate that certain behaviours are abusive, particularly with sexual and coercive and controlling behaviours.

Victims were advised by professionals, including their own lawyers, not to raise domestic abuse because the court would take a negative view of this and it may be used against them as evidence of parental alienation or hostility to co-parenting. It is not surprising in this context that victims may be reluctant to report abuse. [iv]

Survivors are commonly frightened that counter allegations will lead to them losing contact with their children and this made them resistant to disclosing abuse to the court.

'S/he should have left her abuser sooner'– Often something that a abuse victim is criticised for - remaining with an abusive parter and failing to protect the children. Mothers who provided evidence to the expert panel said they stayed with the abuser because of fears that abuse would escalate if they tried to leave. Research shows this is a realistic fear. Mothers felt that whilst they remained with the abuser they were able to protect the children from abuse which they feared would not be able to do if contact was ordered when they left the household. Staying with an abuser should not be considered as evidence that abuse did not happen. There needs to be a better understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse and the decisions victims make to try and protect their children is needed.

'S/he doesn't look like she was abused'– We make assumptions and reach conclusions about people from the way that they present in court, particularly when giving evidence. There is a stereotype of how victims of domestic abuse should behave. This shows a lack of understanding of the effects of trauma and this has impacted on assessments of credibility of victims.

The report felt that there was often little understanding of the ongoing trauma that child sexual abuse offences entail and consequently negative assessments were made about victims and the credibility of their accounts in child arrangements proceedings.

A survey by Refuge suggested there were concerns that the truth of survivors was questioned when they didn't fulfil a narrow stereotype. On the one hand someone didn't look like a victim because they wore make up and seemed to display little emotion (even though a flattened emotional presentation can be a sign of trauma) whilst on the other hand women who had difficulty with communicating abuse, or sometimes broke down and cried were dismissed as 'emotionally temperamental woman' rather than 'this is an abused and traumatised woman'. In contrast if display little or no emotion this can be interpreted as undermining their credibility.

Abusers may be able to convey an image of respectability which gave them credibility and helped convince professionals that abuse did not happen. Examples were provided to the panel of times when it was felt that professionals had been charmed by the abuser. Mothers talked about feeling disadvantaged by appearing emotional and disordered in contrast to a controlled and collected abuser. We need to be alert to gendered stereotypes of how women behave when in distress. There are elements of sexism and class prejudice in the stereotypical assessment of victims and abusers. Abusive behaviour had been regarded as 'justified' as an understandable result of frustration at lack of contact and the mother's perceived hostility to contact in some cases.

It must be remembered that mental ill health can be a barrier to a survivor being able to articulate their experiences. Children's behaviour may be signalling PTSD rather than issues with poor parenting.

There are additional barriers related to cultural norms and stereotypes for men. There is a disparity in support for men and women to assist them in recognising abuse and making allegations of abuse

which means that this is seen more rarely in the court system but suggests that there are greater levels of domestic abuse against men than is reported.

Conclusions

The pro-contact culture appears to affect the process of risk assessment. PD12J is not operating as it was intended. It is implemented inconsistently and is not effective in protecting children and adult victims of abuse from further harm. Resource constraints are a major impediment to the effective implementation of PD12J.

There is a general concern that whilst local authority child protection social workers are familiar with public law procedures in the family courts they are not familiar with private law procedures. Thus, not aware of CAP or PD12J, don't know how to recommend a fact finding hearing and don't have the necessary training to undertake risk assessments.

Despite the intentions of PD 12J the dominant message is that domestic abuse cases are often not treated much differently from non-abuse cases. Courts are allowing unrestricted contact without addressing their behaviour can and does compromise the safety of children and protective parents.

The evidence reviewed indicated that the family courts do not effectively protect many child and adult victims of domestic abuse from further harm. The courts' pro-contact culture results in orders which put children and the protective parent at risk of often severe harm. Many respondents felt that the harm of having continued contact vastly outweighed the value of an ongoing relationship with the abusive parents. The safety and benefit to the child of an ongoing relationship depends on acknowledgment, acceptance and reform of the abusive behaviour that is likely to cause harm. In a large number of cases abusive parents are given contact without being asked to address these issues and instead the non-abusive parent and child are expected to accommodate themselves to contact and bear the costs, regardless of the harm it may cause. There is too much reliance on vulnerable adult victims to keep children safe and insufficient focus on the perpetrator and the need to change their behaviour.

MARTHA HOLMES

[i] J Hunt and A McLeod, *Outcomes of Applications to Court for Contact Orders after Parental Separation or Divorce* (2008); M Harding and A Newnham, *How do County Courts Share the Care of Children Between Parents? Full Report* (2015); CAFCASS & Women's Aid Federation of England, *Allegations of Domestic Abuse in Child Contact Cases* (2017)

[ii] J Harwood, *Child Arrangements Orders (Contact) and Domestic Abuse – an Exploration of the Law and Practice* (PhD thesis, Warwick University, 2019)

[iii] In England, 65,378 children and young people were subject to applications in 2018-19 but reports were ordered in only 35% of cases, involving around 20,000 children. Only 7% of cases, or 17% of cases in which Cafcass was required to undertake work after the first hearing appointed a r16.4 Guardian (CAFCASS Annual Report 2018-19)

[iv] Office of National Statistics, *Domestic Abuse in England and Wales* (2018) suggests less than 20% of victims of domestic abuse tell the police about the issue

Paul Hunter BSc Hons. Biology and Biochemistry

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR – FORENSIC TES NG SERVICE LTD SINCE 2010

Over 20 years' experience developing and running specialist substance-misuse analytical laboratories, involving the development of new methods for analysis and reporting for substance misuse, predominantly using hair and nail samples since 2007.

Providing forensic investigations, testing services and expert reports for Courts, Local Authorities, private and public substance misuse treatment providers, Probation Services, Crime Reduction Partnerships and the Police

Produced over 3000 Expert reports for child care cases (family and criminal proceedings).

Over 100 Court appearances as Expert Witness in Care Proceedings

Recent publication on best practice for investigations and testing in care proceedings, presented at The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists conference in 2019.

Member - Society of Hair Testing (SOHT) and The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT).

Forensic Testing Service

State-of-the-art forensic laboratory, West Yorkshire

Managing Director Paul Hunter

Forensic Testing Service work to provide evidence for use by local authorities and the family legal sector in courts. Managing Director Paul Hunter explains that in instances of substance misuse, particularly those which impact the wellbeing of children, they ensure that information is accurately and efficiently obtained and processed. Paul tells The Parliamentary Review more about how FTS serves courts in the UK, and why the current system is in such serious need of reform.

Substance misuse has a devastating impact on our lives generally, but of particular concern is the harm that it brings to children's lives. It puts the lives of children of all ages at risk, even before they are born and if they survive the traumas, their lives are often damaged irreparably.

FTS now have the knowledge and capability to drive much needed reform that will improve the safety of children affected by substance abuse. This is our clear mission and what motivates our team and drives the innovation, delivery and growth of our service.

My previous work in substance abuse started in the mid-1990s and involved the introduction of a new patented technology and unique service to reform the provision of clinical and legal evidence for substance misuse street clinics, probation services and crime reduction partnerships. This work introduced me to the legal process, where I discovered that the family legal teams and courts had a very poor grasp of the complex science behind forensic testing and were being misled by this evidence.

In childcare proceedings there was a clear disconnect between what the court required and what the industry provided. However, there were no drug testing

Facts about Forensic Testing Service

- Managing Director: Paul Hunter
- Established in 2009
- Based in Mirfield, West Yorkshire
- Services: Providing legally defensible expert evidence for courts in the UK
- No. of employees: 110
- Leading essential reform – the first and only company to have introduced the model of best practice in the UK
- www.forensic-testing.co.uk

» CHALLENGES

Our biggest challenge for reform in this sector is getting an audience with the judiciary and other decision-making stakeholders to educate those who need to understand why change is required urgently. Most of the work we do is paid through public funding where the budget is controlled by the Legal Aid Agency or local authority.

The LAA are not accessible to us and the majority of local authority commissioners do not feel it's appropriate to speak to us. Therefore, they continue to be misinformed and continue to naively waste public money, perpetuating the risk and suffering that children face every day from substance misuse. There is infrastructure in place to deliver this education very quickly through judicial training and the local family justice boards. Although this education is essential, the structure is not presently accessible to us at FTS.

> "In childcare proceedings there was a clear disconnect between what the court required and what the industry provided"

laboratories providing a service designed to help the court process. The services available were clearly not fit for purpose and so in 2009, FTS was born.

Reforming the system

Traditionally, a restricted drug or alcohol screening test is instructed by courts to deduce if individuals are abusing drugs or alcohol over extended histories of a few or several months. The output from this testing is a "positive", concluding substances have been abused, or "negative", concluding no substances have been abused. However, when investigating a case to establish an extended history, a wide range of biomarkers need to be tested from complex samples, including hair, nails and blood, the results from which, are not binary and should not be reported as such.

Without reform, numerous factors, including hair colour, can influence a judge's decision on a child's custody

The court needs to know: does substance abuse represent a risk to a child? To answer this question requires more than a simple drug or alcohol test for the parent. Testing the child, which is complex and rarely undertaken, is also a crucial factor in many cases. The most significant factor missing in the present simple approach is a comprehensive forensic investigation, essential to provide the critical context needed to interpret and understand test results.

Held up by court

The majority of local authorities and the family legal sector remain unaware that much of the "scientific" evidence from this testing does not meet the standard of proof required for legal proceedings. This results in a false confidence and overdependence on it to make decisions.

Using this binary approach to report drug test results, in isolation of forensic investigations, is leading to the gravest miscarriages of justice imaginable; the wrongful removal of a child from their parents or leaving a child to likely harm or suffering. This binary process is designed for high volume commercial, clinical and epidemiological applications, but it is not appropriate for legal proceedings.

In family courts, evidence must achieve a standard of proof described as "balance of probabilities", but recent high-profile court of appeal cases have exposed that the incumbent process does not achieve this in all cases.

Without reform, having black hair means you're more likely to lose your child compared to having blonde or ginger hair. FTS's comprehensive database of cases from the past ten years has demonstrated these significant failings. Using the existing process, up to 40 per cent of regular drug users, would have been falsely identified as not using drugs. Around 20 per cent of non-users would

have been falsely accused of using drugs. Given that the custody of a child often rests on this evidence, this lottery has to stop, these decisions must not be left to chance and the process has to change.

Systematic reform

Our unique model of best practice incorporates a thorough forensic investigation and appropriate analytical work, to deliver the evidence that answers the specific questions relating to each case. Decisions can be made earlier and with more confidence, to assist the family courts achieve their strict 26-week window to open and close a case. It avoids the present misleading evidence, confusion and misinterpretation of scientific reports. It reduces the waste of public funds and significant cost to the child and families when the wrong decisions are made. The child's interest is placed at the centre of our work so the evidence needed to make the right decision for the child will continue to be the focus of our efforts.

We have revolutionised the testing process, so that much of the drug and or alcohol abuse that presently goes undetected, including the growing number of new synthetic drugs such as synthetic cannabinoids like "spice", can now be detected and reported for all cases. Our experts provide CPD training to legal teams, judiciary and social services allowing all to fully understand what this evidence means and crucially, why changing to instructing an expert is vital to obtain reliable evidence.

We have developed a highly sophisticated forensic laboratory in Mirfield, West Yorkshire, UKAS accredited and Home Office licensed, which holds certification from the Society of Hair Testing and Society of Toxicological and Forensic Chemistry. Our laboratory has a significant commitment to research and development working closely with major universities and laboratories in the UK and Europe offering a comprehensive and unique range of analytical services in forensic toxicology and bioanalysis, which we continue to expand.

FTS are leading the way in reforming drug and alcohol toxicology evidence for legal proceedings

In partnership with universities, we are investing heavily in IT to complete the development and introduction of a comprehensive data processing and reporting system, supported by the Leeds Enterprise Partnership and Innovate UK. The system incorporates decision trees, machine learning, and explainable artificial intelligence to fully optimise the strength and consistency of the evidence produced. These developments will facilitate the opportunity to rapidly scale up our services for all courts and local authorities in the UK and legal services in Europe. Courts can then feel increasingly confident that they are making the correct decisions and will no longer have to rely on crude, costly and confusing evidence.

> "Without reform, having black hair means you're more likely to lose your child compared to having blonde or ginger hair"

» FTS BEST PRACTICE MODEL

The FTS model of best practice delivers reliable evidence that achieves "balance of probabilities" for each case. It is specifically designed to assist the court in making the right decisions for the future of the child. This service is the first of its kind in Europe for dealing with cases involving substance misuse and is strongly supported by leading experts, district family judges and guardians working for children. The present process has been in place for over 30 years without reform, despite its inherent risks, its associated costs and ever-growing demands being placed on the legal sectors resources. If we value the safety and future of children, then the present process must change.

Tadhgh Barwell O'Connor

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Tadhgh specialises in all areas of family law. He joined chambers as a tenant in October 2020 following completion of his pupillage.

During his pupillage Tadhgh witnessed complex matrimonial finance, private and public law children work, and child abduction matters while supervised by Nicholas Anderson, Victoria Green, Peter Newman and Charlotte Hartley.

Prior to law Tadhgh worked as an Actor and an Educational Consultant. He has extensive experience of working with international and high net worth families, as well as those with children who have special educational needs and specific health or religious requirements.

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