



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS

# Elizabeth Woodcraft

YEAR OF CALL: 1980



Elizabeth retired from practice in December 2014 and has since become a Door Tenant at Garden Court Chambers. Elizabeth was a family barrister whose work covered a wide range of family issues, including care and private law cases.

If you would like to get in touch with Elizabeth please contact the clerking team:

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You can also contact Elizabeth directly:

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**FAMILY LAW**

Elizabeth was a family barrister whose work covered a wide range of family issues, including care and private law cases. She frequently represented children as well as parents in the Court of Appeal, the High Court, Principal Registry of the Family Division and the County Court.

Elizabeth was recently part of the legal team in the People's Commission of Inquiry into the proposals by the Secretary of State for Health for closures at Lewisham Hospital. She was also a co-ordinator at the International Commission of Inquiry into the Miami 5 (Cubans imprisoned in the US). She has recently become involved with the group Housing for Women and is also working on the Legal Landmarks for Women project.

## **NOTABLE CASES**

### **Re B (a child) [2013] UKSC 33**

Appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal. Issues identified by the court for their consideration included the meaning of significant harm, the relationship between the nature and the gravity of the harm which is feared and the degree of likelihood of that harm being suffered in the future, the proportionality of a care order with a care plan for adoption in a case such as this and the proper approach of the Court of Appeal to a finding that the threshold has been crossed. Elizabeth represented the child through her Children's Guardian in this case. A webinar of a discussion of the case with other members of the child's legal team is available for download.

### **B (a child) [2012] EWCA Civ 1475**

Appeal against the making of a care order with a care plan of adoption, when the child in question had been removed from her parents' care shortly after birth and not suffered any physical harm. Appeal dismissed.

### **Re H [2008] EWCA Civ 1245**

Appeal against the making of a care order. Appeal allowed. The judge did not give sufficient weight to the need of the child, aged 10, to maintain the very significant relationship with her mother.

### **Lambeth London Borough v S, C, V and J (By his Children's Guardian, N), Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and Secretary of State for the Home Department Intervening [2006] EWHC 326 (Fam)**

Issue of paternity raised by the mother. Presumed father was dead having been unlawfully killed. Metropolitan Police held the only example of his DNA. The case explored whether that should be made available to establish the child's paternity. It was maintained it should not.

## **Re J (Care: Assessment: Fair Trial) [2006] EWCA Civ 545, (2006) The Times June 21**

Challenge to the making of a care order where a meeting of professionals had not included the mother, herself a minor. Appeal failed.

## **Lambeth London Borough v S, C, V and J (By his Children's Guardian); Legal Services**

**Commission Intervening [2005] EWHC 776 (Fam), [2005] 2 FLR 1171**

Duty of local authority to pay for assessments of potential carers.

## **Re M (Sperm Donor Father) [2003] Fam Law 94**

Rights of contact of a father who had donated sperm to a lesbian couple.

## **BACKGROUND**

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Elizabeth joined Garden Court Chambers in October 2013. Prior to this, she had been a member of Tooks Chambers and, from 2007 - 2011, was Deputy Head of Chambers there. She had previously practised at Wellington Street Chambers, from 1981-1990, and at Mitre House Chambers until her move to Tooks in 1996.

Before coming to the Bar, Elizabeth worked as National Co-ordinator at the National Women's Aid Federation and she assisted Jo Richardson with her private member's bill as it worked its way through parliament to become the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976.

Elizabeth was a member of an investigative team researching the issue of strip searching in Armagh Jail. A recent project has gathered together the memories and experiences of those who had dealings with the jail during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. More information can be found in the [Prisons Memory Archive](#).

From 1991-1995 Elizabeth was the Chair of Rights of Women - an organisation of women working on legal issues affecting women.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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### **Legal publications**

['Lewisham Hospital prompts tribunal of the people'](#) *The Law Gazette* 15 July 2013

're G - a missed opportunity' *Family Law* January 2007

'The Madonna Complex' *Solicitors' Journal* August 2006

Contributor to *The Woman Lawyer: Making the difference* Butterworths, 1998

'Lesbian parents - changing attitudes' *Rights of Women Bulletin* Summer 1997

'Family Divisions:' a discussion of the problems in families today, *Socialist Lawyer* Spring 1994

## **Fiction**

### ***The Saturday Girls* 2018**

*A Sense of Occasion - the Chelmsford Stories*, 2014

*Good Bad Woman*, 2001

*Babyface*, 2002, HarperCollins

## **TRAINING AND SEMINARS**

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Speaker on 'how to be a feminist lawyer' at a meeting of the Haldane Society. Elizabeth's talk was recorded and is available [as a podcast](#).

Part of the Legal Team at the Lewisham Hospital People's Commission of Inquiry, June 2013

Speaker at A Birthday Celebration for Mary Wollstonecraft, March 2013

As part of the book project *Feminist Judgments: From Theory to Practice*, Elizabeth interviewed one of the editors as well as a contributor. The podcast is available on the [Pod Academy website](#).

Domestic Violence International Symposium, Centre for Parliamentary Studies, Brussels 2011

Contributor to Feminism with Fizz - series of seminars on issues relating to women and the law

Feminism and Legal Practice Critical Lawyers Conference Law, Gender and Sexuality, 2007

London - Battle of Ideas, 'the Rise and Rise of Human Rights', 2006

Buenos Aires, Argentina - Domestic Violence (British Council) 2003

Ankara, Turkey - Domestic Violence (British Council) 2003

Beijing China - Domestic Violence (British Council) 2000

## EDUCATION

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Education Birmingham BA (Hons)

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

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Family Law Bar Association (FLBA)

Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Rights of Women

Fawcett Society

Liberty

## LANGUAGES

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French (fluent)

Italian (basic)

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