

Fighting for families



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It took me a while to find my vocation in fertility law. I conceived my daughter within a same-sex relationship while training in 2002. Starting a family as a same-sex couple was not straightforward and my wife had no legal recognition as a parent. It gave me a passion to fight for families created in different ways. I developed a specialism in this area of law, almost accidentally at first just by helping other people in similar situations.

When I started, fertility law didn't really exist as a specialism,

but it grew and in 2009 I launched the UK's first specialist fertility law firm. We now have a team of 11 passionate people. We work on fascinating and often groundbreaking cases on surrogacy, donor conception, same-sex parenting and relationship breakdown, and trans-family law.

We like pushing the boundaries, and have been very proud of our 17 reported cases, many of which have [taken] the law forward. I was particularly proud to have been involved in winning legal recognition for same-sex parents in 2008, given the personal resonance.

My business partner and I also run a non-profit surrogacy agency (Brilliant Beginnings). It helps people conceive through surrogacy safely and responsibly, both in the UK and overseas. It is the first organisation of its kind in the UK and run closely alongside our legal work. It is a very different thing for a law firm to do, but we feel strongly that our practical experience helps our legal work and vice versa.

The UK's laws on surrogacy are backward and cause enormous problems for families and children. We find it incredibly frustrating as we deal with the day-to-day consequences and are fighting a campaign to win legal reform. Earlier this year we secured a declaration of incompatibility from

the High Court (that the law was incompatible with the human rights of single parents), and in response the government has asked the Law Commission to consider including surrogacy law reform in its next programme.

We are delighted because the law was never properly thought through and has not been reviewed since the 1980s. Its restrictions are creating problems, including children born overseas without legal parents anywhere in the world, and an enormous amount of risk and uncertainty around UK surrogacy arrangements.

We want to see surrogacy properly recognised, with a transparent process for people to go through upfront to manage it properly and ensure things

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have been set up in the best way. But most importantly, we want to see children recognised promptly as belonging to the family they were born into. The UK has a very proud tradition in the rest of our laws for being open-minded and progressive. This is a glaring anomaly which needs to be addressed.