


Vanessa Duff (Mitchell)


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Vanessa is a senior associate in the divorce and family team.

Vanessa is a Senior Associate qualified in Hong Kong and in England & Wales, and is a native English & French speaker.

She has over 14 years of experience in advising on all aspects of family law and issues which arise from the breakdown of a relationship, including divorce, financial arrangements, and separation. She also advises clients in connection with disputes involving children, to include child maintenance, issues relating to custody, care and control and access, as well as on applications for leave to remove a child from the jurisdiction. Vanessa has experience in dealing with cases of child abduction under the Hague Convention, and the associated Court proceedings in the High Court.

Vanessa's expertise lies in dealing with cases which have an international perspective, with a particular interest in cases having a Hong Kong-European dimension and jurisdictional disputes. She has numerous relationships with foreign lawyers and is able to manage multi-country cases and rapidly source foreign advice where necessary.

She is also a specialist in advising on and drafting prenuptial/postnuptial agreements, cohabitation agreements, and separation agreements, both domestic and international. This is an area of practice which requires sensitivity and tact and may require a good understanding of European marital regimes and marriage contracts.

Vanessa's client base includes high net worth individuals, entrepreneurs and city professionals. She is skilled in resolving cases with complex financial and disclosure issues, including cases involving inherited wealth and family businesses. Many of her clients are expatriates, and French speaking, and she will conduct meetings in French if necessary. She always goes the extra mile for her clients.

Where appropriate, Vanessa is committed to resolving disputes outside of the Courtroom and is a keen advocate of alternative methods of dispute resolution, including mediation, arbitration and private FDRs.

Prior to joining the Hong Kong family team, Vanessa worked in the Withers London family team for over 11 years. She grew up and was educated in Belgium, and subsequently studied in London and Paris.

She has been featured in various publications to include Expat Living, Hong Kong Lawyer, Hong Kong Economic Times, Around DB, Hong Kong Animal Post and Hong Kong Madame.

Vanessa is also a qualified Mental Health First Aider and able to assist and support clients who are experiencing emotional distress or other mental health concerns.

Talks

- *'Protecting Wealth: How to safeguard corporate and personal interests'*, The French Chamber of Commerce - 27 October 2021
- *'International mobility in a world of Covid-19 - European opportunities and points for reflection'*, Withers - 11 March 2021
- *'Preserving Wealth - What Owners, Entrepreneurs and Founders need to know'*, Italian Chamber of Commerce - 12 May 2021
- *'Modern Families: Getting married, living together, estate planning and the international dynamics'*, ATT/CIOT Private Client Conference - 12 June 2018
- *'Keeping it in the Family (pre-nups, Wills and trusts: the law and practical considerations)'*, ATT/CIOT Private Client Conference - 7 June 2016

External publications

'The Right Choice', Expat Living - Dec-Feb 2022, author

'Christmas engagement? How to talk prenups', Dec 2021, author

'Child Abduction And Proceedings Under The Hague Convention - The Decision In FR And MF HCMP 532/2021', Hong Kong Lawyer - October 2021, author

'In the best interests of the animal', AroundDB - Sept 2021, co-author

'Top tips when choosing a family/divorce lawyer', Hong Kong Madame - 15 June 2021

'Calling it Quits: The 30-day "cooling off" period before commencing a divorce in China' - 4 May 2021

'5 Things to Consider Before Moving Overseas', Expat Living - March 2021

'Impact of COVID-19 in Hong Kong on Child Relocation' - October 2020

'Coronavirus: Foreign Marriage Contracts in Hong Kong - time to have a closer look' - 1 April 2020

'Traversa case leaves England attractive for divorces', Spear's - 15 February 2011

'Costs consequences', Family law Journal - May 2011

'Prenuptial Agreements in England and Wales; impact of the Judgment in Radmacher v Granatino', AIAF (Italian Publication) - August 2011

'Second chances', Family law Journal - October 2011

Admissions

England and Wales, 2007

Hong Kong, 2020

Education

Kings College London, Law

Université Paris 1 (Sorbonne) France, Law

Languages

English

French

Key dates

Year joined: 2008

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