



 Howse Williams

Family and Matrimonial Practice

March 2023

Contents

Contents.....	0
About Us	2
Our Approach.....	3
Our Family and Matrimonial Practice	3
Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP).....	4
Linda Heathfield	5
Karen Lam.....	7
Stephanie Ng	8
Victoria Ng TEP.....	9
Our Team	10

Howse Williams is an independent Hong Kong law firm which combines the in-depth experience of its lawyers with a creative, forward-thinking approach.

About Us

Our key practice areas are corporate/commercial and corporate finance; commercial and maritime dispute resolution; clinical negligence and healthcare; insurance, personal injury and professional indemnity insurance; employment; family and matrimonial; trusts and wealth preservation; wills, probate and estate administration; property and building management; banking; fraud; distressed debt; financial services/corporate regulatory and compliance.

As an independent law firm we are able to minimise legal and commercial conflicts of interest and act for clients in every industry sector. The partners have spent the majority of their careers in Hong Kong and have a detailed understanding of international business and business in Asia.

The HW partners and their teams have an excellent reputation for delivering high quality legal advice with a practical and commercial approach to solving legal issues in line with clients' commercial objectives.

Our Approach

We provide a personal, practical and cost-oriented approach to clients who are often undergoing a very stressful and difficult period in their lives. We work closely with other professionals in the field of family disputes, particularly mediators, to provide the best solution for our clients. We fully support mediation as an alternative method of resolving family disputes. We are accessible, respond immediately when emergencies arise and provide our services efficiently and effectively. Our clients' privacy and the confidentiality of their personal arrangements are treated with the utmost importance. We ensure that our clients have a realistic idea of what to expect from our services. We have no hesitation in taking action by way of legal proceedings immediately if the necessity arises but overall our approach is conciliatory. We are mindful that the cases we handle are very sensitive and often involve children. We provide practical solutions and protect our clients' interests.

Our Family and Matrimonial Practice

Our team is led by **Linda Heathfield**, who has over 20 years of family and matrimonial legal experience. Our clients include professionals, entrepreneurs, owners of family businesses, celebrities, and high net worth individuals, often with assets in multiple jurisdictions around the world. Linda and her team have experience of contested multi-jurisdictional cases in the USA, France, Switzerland, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Canada, and the UK and have been involved in cases relating to the Hague Convention on the Abduction of Children involving children wrongfully removed from, or wrongfully brought to Hong Kong. In addition we provide advice upon the following:

- Relationship breakdown, divorce and separation, including financial applications and arrangements for children.
- Disputes involving the custody, care and control of children, including access and child maintenance.
- Issues involving children such as paternity, schooling and name change applications both in respect of married and unmarried couples and cohabitants.
- Abduction or return of children to or from Hague Convention and non-Hague Convention countries.
- Family financial issues such as maintenance claims and capital claims, including property transfers.
- Emergency injunction applications (e.g. to prevent the disposal of assets or their removal abroad and to protect the victims of abuse and domestic violence).
- Applications for private adoptions.
- Pre-nuptial agreements, post-nuptial agreements and separation deeds.
- Reputation management and media issues.
- Drafting of wills, probate and general civil litigation matters.
- Trusts, in particular family trusts, educational trusts and charitable trusts.

Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP)

HW Partner Stacey Devoy is a full member of STEP and is a qualified Trust and Estate practitioner. Stacey and her team give advice on a wide range of inheritance and succession matters including:

- Drafting trusts, wills and powers of attorney
- Safely passing on a family business from one generation to another
- Providing for an individual following their partner's death, while protecting the interests of their children
- Ensuring elderly or vulnerable relatives are cared for and supported
- Protecting the interests of co-habiting couples
- Helping clients to support charitable causes in an effective way

STEP is a worldwide professional association with over 20,000 members across 95 countries. STEP holds its members to the highest ethical and professional standards.





Linda Heathfield

Consultant

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Born in England and holding both British and Australian nationality, Linda was admitted to practice law in Hong Kong in October 1994 and in England and Wales in June 1995. She was later admitted to practice in Queensland Australia in January 2002.

Linda's cases often involve families with assets in multiple jurisdictions around the world. Her work includes all manner of children's issues, including custody, care and control and other parenting disputes, such as access, child maintenance, paternity and schooling applications both in respect of married and unmarried couples and cohabitants. Linda has processed a number of applications for private adoptions, usually with extended families or step-families and cases involving the abduction or return of children to or from Hague Convention and non-Hague Convention countries. Her work in respect of family finances has covered maintenance claims made for or against her clients, capital claims, including property transfers as well as an increasing number of pre-nuptial agreements and separation deeds.

Linda became an Executive Committee Member of the Hong Kong Family Law Association in 2006 and was its Chairlady in 2010 and 2011. She was elected a Fellow of the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers in 2007 and became a member of the International Academy of Collaborative Practitioners in 2009 with the objective of becoming an active collaborative lawyer. She has undertaken the first multi-disciplinary training set up in Hong Kong for collaborative family law. Linda has completed mediation and advanced mediation courses in 1996 and 1997 and whilst never becoming a practicing mediator, actively promotes mediation as a means of resolving her clients' disputes.

Linda has edited educational materials on family law and matrimonial practice for Legal Executives studying in Hong Kong through Hong Kong University in conjunction with the Institute of Legal Executives in the UK.

▼ *Experience*

2012 Howse Williams
2008 Ip & Heathfield
1994 Boase, Cohen & Collins

▼ *Education*

University of Hong Kong, 1991-1992
University of Liverpool, 1973-1976

▼ *Professional Admissions / Qualifications*

1994 Hong Kong

1995 England & Wales

2002 Australia (Queensland)

▼ *Professional Affiliations*

Fellow, International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (2007)

Member, International Academy of Collaborative Practitioners (2009)

Member of Lawasia



Karen Lam

Partner

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Karen was admitted to practice law in New South Wales, Australia in 2007 and Hong Kong in 2008. Karen's practice focuses on family law matters with emphasis on matrimonial disputes including divorce and separation, child custody, wardship and financial applications, third party interests, injunctions, pre- and post-nuptial agreements and settlements. Karen's other areas of focus are will drafting, probate and general civil litigation matters.

Karen is a member of the Family Law Committee of the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Committee of the Hong Kong Family Law Association. Karen has been elected a fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers in 2020. Karen has been appointed by the Chief Justice to sit on the Family Proceedings Court Users Committee in January 2021. Karen has obtained the Lawyer's License of the People's Republic of China (Guangdong - Hong Kong - Macao Greater Bay Area) in 2022.

Karen is an Accredited Mediator on the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre's (HKIAC) Panel of General Mediators and is a Civil Celebrant of Marriages in Hong Kong.

*"Karen Lam is a star in the industry and is a very safe and reliable pair of hands."
Legal 500 2022*

▼ *Experience*

2012 Howse Williams
2009 Ip & Heathfield
2008 Boase, Cohen & Collins

▼ *Education*

PCLL, City University of Hong Kong
Bachelor of Laws, University of New South Wales, Australia
Bachelor of Commerce, University of New South Wales, Australia

▼ *Professional Admissions / Qualifications*

2022 The People's Republic of China (Guangdong - Hong Kong - Macao Greater Bay Area)
2016 Civil Celebrant of Marriages
2010 Accredited General Mediator
2008 Hong Kong
2007 New South Wales, Australia

▼ *Professional Affiliations*

Member of the Family Proceedings Court Users Committee
Member of the Family Law Committee, The Law Society of Hong Kong
Fellow, International Academy of Family Lawyers
Member of Committee, Hong Kong Family Law Association
Member, Hong Kong Collaborative Practice Group
Member, LAWASIA



Stephanie Ng

Partner

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Stephanie was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2013. She advises on all areas of matrimonial law, including divorce, pre-nuptial agreements, custody and childcare arrangements, adoption, wardship proceedings, and financial disputes.

In particular, Stephanie has a keen interest in matters concerning the rights and interests of children and has received training in parental coordination, family therapy for divorced families, and child-inclusive mediation and counselling. She frequently assists clients with applications under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction for the return of abducted children and applications for the reciprocal enforcement of maintenance orders in foreign jurisdictions.

Stephanie maintains an extensive practice in probate and estate planning and regularly works with overseas counsel on cross-jurisdictional estate matters. She has experience in both contentious and non-contentious probate matters. She also advises on deeds of family arrangements, enduring powers of attorney, and applications under Part II of the Mental Health Ordinance.

Stephanie has been ranked as “Associate to Watch” in Chambers Asia-Pacific in 2020 and 2021 and in Chambers Greater China Region in 2022.

▼ Experience

2015 Howse Williams
2011 Withers

▼ Education

2011 The Chinese University of Hong Kong: Post-graduate Certificate in Laws
2010 The Chinese University of Hong Kong: Juris Doctor
2007 University of British Columbia: Bachelor of Arts, Classics.

▼ Professional Admissions / Qualifications

2013 Hong Kong

▼ Professional Affiliations

Member, Law Society of Hong Kong



Victoria Ng TEP

Partner

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Victoria was admitted to practice law in Hong Kong in 2013.

Victoria's practice focuses on matrimonial and trust matters. Her cases always involve international elements including relocations and substantial overseas assets, including those held in overseas trust. Victoria advises clients on issues when new marital relationships are to be formed or when relationships break down, drafts and negotiates pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements, separation deeds, and divorce settlements.

Victoria advises on children matters such as custody, care and control, access arrangement disputes with respect to children born to married and unmarried couples and cohabitants. She also advises on a wide range of inheritance and succession matters.

Victoria is a Registered Trusts & Estates Practitioner with STEP (the Society of Trust & Estate Practitioners) and sits on STEP HK Marketing & Communications Sub-committee. Victoria has been awarded the STEP Diploma in International Trust Management with distinction. She advises on trusts and the duties of trustees as well as beneficiaries' rights to information on trusts.

Victoria is also a Committee Member of the Hong Kong Family Law Association and a member of LawAsia. She is fluent in English, Cantonese and Putonghua.

▼ Experience

2014 Howse Williams
2011 Ip & Heathfield

▼ Education

2017 Diploma in International Trust Management (Distinction), STEP
2011 Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL), The University of Hong Kong
2010 Master of Laws in Chinese Law (LLM), Peking University, Beijing
2008 Bachelor of Laws (LLB), King's College London, UK

▼ Professional Admissions / Qualifications

2013 Hong Kong

▼ Professional Affiliations

Registered Trust & Estate Practitioner, STEP
Committee Member, Hong Kong Family Law Association
Committee Member, STEP HK Marketing & Communications Sub-committee
Member, The Law Society of Hong Kong
Member, LawAsia

Our Team



Veronica Lee

Associate

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Veronica was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2018. Her practice focuses on family and matrimonial disputes relating to divorce and separation, ancillary relief applications, and children matters such as custody, care and control and access arrangements, both with respect to children born to married and unmarried couples. In addition to divorce proceedings, Veronica has experience in preparing and reviewing and advising pre- and post-nuptial agreements.

Veronica speaks fluent English, Cantonese and Mandarin.



Hermia Wong

Associate

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Hermia was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2021. Her practice focuses on family and children matters. She assists the team in a variety of cases, for example, tracing dissipated assets that may take forms of family trusts and offshore corporate structures, drafting wills, pre-nuptial agreements and deeds, as well as resolving disputes arising from nuptial agreements. Hermia also advises on all matters related to children, such as post-separation care arrangements, parental orders, child protection, domestic violence, family relocation and wardship proceedings, etc.

Hermia specialises in international child law, in particular, surrogacy and cross-border child abduction whether or not under the framework of The Hague Convention on the Abduction of Children. She is currently the only family practitioner in Hong Kong that has earned a Master of Laws (LL.M.) specialised in International Children's Rights from Leiden University, Netherlands, where Hermia graduated first in her cohort with highest distinction.

She has excellent command in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.



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