

PAYNE HICKS BEACH



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In the spotlight - Jessica Henson, partner, Payne Hicks Beach for eprivateclient.

Jessica Henson is a partner at Payne Hicks Beach specialising in trusts and estates disputes. She advises on a broad range of private wealth disputes including complex trust litigation, contested estates and commercial disputes involving fiduciary issues – both in England and offshore.

She also advises on professional negligence cases relating to trust, tax and succession matters. Ms Henson joined Payne Hicks Beach as a partner in 2020 from Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner.

Why do you specialise in this area?

Private client disputes involve a blend of legal technicality, commercial complexity and human psychology that I find compelling. The stakes are often high: by their nature, these disputes will have significant emotional and financial ramifications for the parties involved. That is a responsibility that I take seriously, but it is also what makes acting in this area quite so rewarding.

How might the landscape for dispute resolution change in the next 12 months?

Alternative dispute resolution will become the final destination for an even greater number of cases. The Court of Appeal's recent decision in *Churchill v Merthyr Tydfil* empowers courts to

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stay proceedings for parties to pursue alternative dispute resolution. This reflects a much wider movement, by policy-makers and the judiciary, to ensure that “alternative” dispute resolution becomes mainstream, ingrained in the civil justice system in a much more committed and coherent way.

Family lawyers have been leading the way on private dispute resolution for some time. They recognise that clients want disputes resolved in a cost-effective and fair way that meets their commercial and their personal needs. I expect to see both the judiciary and practitioners place much greater emphasis on negotiated dispute resolution. This will in turn demand much earlier exchanges of disclosure and expert evidence so that parties can cut to the chase and make an informed decision about settlement as a priority.

What’s the best piece of career advice you’ve received?

Always take the call. And from there, do good work, on time.

What’s one book you think everyone should read?

The Forgiveness Project: Stories for a Vengeful Age – by Marina Cantacuzino. This is a collection of testimonies from survivors and bereaved relatives who have chosen to break the toxic cycle of revenge and create new, hopeful narratives. Moving and inspiring in equal measure.

When's the last time you failed spectacularly at something?

When I tried to ski down Le Pas de Chavanette (the “Swiss Wall”) in one piece. It was an epic failure involving summersaults – but no broken bones, thankfully.

What was your student job?

I answered the “banana phone” for Innocent Smoothies, dealing with stockists, bored schoolchildren and everything in between.

AUTHOR

Jessica Henson