Carolina Marin Pedreno, a partner at Dawson Cornwell, acts for Rachael Neustadt, the mother whose two children were detained by their father in Russia in 2012. The children have been returned to England in the first case where the Russian Federation has applied the 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children.

What were the main challenges? When the retention took place in Moscow, the Russian Federation had not ratified the 1996 Hague Convention, but we argued that they should apply it in this case. Every strategy and legal document had to be discussed with Rachael’s Russian legal team with a view to obtaining the enforcement of English court orders by the court in Moscow. This was the type of case where significant international co-operation was needed.

What was your worst day as a lawyer? When the Legal Aid, Sentencing & Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 was implemented, legal aid was cut in a great many areas. As a result I was unable to help many families that I had been helping just the day before.

What was your most memorable experience as a lawyer? When the director of the charity Reunite informed me that she had heard from Russia that the children had been located and Rachael would be reunited with them. Equally memorable was a night five years ago when police called to confirm that a child who had been missing for five years — having been removed from Spain to Ecuador to Bolivia to Germany and finally England — had been located and so the collection order we had obtained could be executed. I felt like jumping in my car and driving to the north of England police station to collect the child myself!
Lawyer of the week

Carolina Marín Pedreño

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Why did you become a lawyer? When I finished my law degree in Spain, I undertook a work placement in this jurisdiction with this firm and from my first day, I knew I wanted to be an international lawyer.

Who has been the most influential person in your life? Anne-Marie Hutchinson, my mentor and the head of the children department at this firm. Her human rights record is an example to all of us.

What would your career advice be? If you can cope with occasional lows, regular stress and a lot of hard work, you will be rewarded with one of the most satisfying and stimulating jobs imaginable.

Where do you see yourself in ten years’ time? Still in private practice and continuing to do my best for abducted children; though hopefully spending more time in Spain.

Linda Tsang
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