

Experts in the community

Ann Hodson

Solicitor and Mediator



INFINITY FAMILY LAW

Speaker

Ann Hodson

(Professionally known as Ann Thomas)

Solicitor, Mediator and Collaborative
lawyer

Consultant Stephens Scown solicitors
(www.stephens-scown.co.uk)

- *Brilliant client skills and a delight to work with*
- *Ann Thomas is a leading international children lawyer and one of the top such specialists in London. She also brings intelligence, thought and planning to her cases and does all in her power to achieve the result her client seeks.*
- *Ann Thomas is a lawyer, smart and compassionate.*
- *Highly recommended for her work in children and relocation cases*



Experts in the community

Expertise does not just live in institutions, boardrooms, or formal roles.

- 🌍 It lives **in our communities**.
- 🌍 It lives in **lived experience**,
- 🌍 It lives in **shared knowledge**,
- 🌍 It lives in **everyday problem-solving**,
- 🌍 It lives in the **quiet contributions people make without recognition**.
- 🌍 It is about **recognising, valuing, and unlocking the expertise** that already surrounds us.

Redefining an Expert

What makes someone an expert?

- 🌍 Is it qualifications?
- 🌍 Years of experience?
- 🌍 Professional accreditation?

Redefining an Expert

An expert is, quite simply:

- 🌍 **Someone who understands something deeply—and can use that understanding to make a difference.**

And by that definition, experts exist everywhere.

- 🌍 The **parent** navigating complex support systems for their child
- 🌍 The **volunteer** who knows exactly how to engage isolated individuals
- 🌍 The **neighbour** who brings people together during difficult times
- 🌍 The **frontline worker** who understands real needs better than any report

Redefining an Expert

These people may not always be recognised as “experts,” but **they hold knowledge that is practical, human, and essential.**

The Power of Lived Experience

It comes from:

- 🌍 **Facing challenges** firsthand
- 🌍 **Navigating barriers** personally
- 🌍 **Learning through trial, error, and persistence**

The Power of Lived Experience

But someone with **lived experience** can tell you:

- 🌍 Whether it's **accessible**
- 🌍 Whether it's **understandable**
- 🌍 Whether it **actually helps**

Why Community Expertise Matters More Than Ever

Challenges today are not simple or isolated:

- **Health and wellbeing** are linked to **social conditions**
- **Education** connects with **economic opportunity**
- **Community resilience** affects everything from **mental health to safety**

Why Community Expertise Matters More Than Ever

Collective intelligence

When **professionals** and **communities** work together, it combines:

- 🌍 **Technical knowledge**
- 🌍 **Lived experience**
- 🌍 **Local understanding**

We create solutions that are:

- 🌍 **More relevant**
- 🌍 **More inclusive**
- 🌍 **More effective**

Barriers to Recognising Community Experts

- 🌍 Traditional Hierarchies
- 🌍 Confidence and Voice
- 🌍 Systems and Structures
- 🌍 Language and accessibility

What It Means to Truly Listen

Listening.

- 🌍 Not listening to respond...
- 🌍 Not listening to confirm what we already believe...

But listening to **understand**. And that kind of listening **requires**:

- 🌍 **Openness**
- 🌍 **Humility**
- 🌍 **Curiosity**

From Consultation to Collaboration to Co-Creation

Consultation → to Collaboration → to Co-Creation

- 🌍 **Consultation** asks:
“What do you think of this idea?”
- 🌍 **Collaboration** asks:
“How can we work together?”
- 🌍 **Co-creation** says:
“Let’s design this together from the beginning.”

Practical Ways to Elevate Community Expertise

1. Create Inclusive Spaces

- 🌍 Make sure people feel welcome, safe, and valued.
- 🌍 Use **clear language**
- 🌍 Be **flexible** in formats
- 🌍 **Remove barriers** to participation

2. Value Different Forms of Knowledge

- 🌍 Expertise is **not just academic**—it is **experiential, relational, and cultural**.

Practical Ways to Elevate Community Expertise

3. Share Power

- 🌍 **Involve community voices** in decision-making—not just feedback.

4. Build Relationships, Not Transactions

- 🌍 **Trust** is built over time, not in one meeting.

5. Recognise and Reward Contributions

- 🌍 **Acknowledge** time, input, and expertise appropriately.

The Role of Leadership

Leaders must:

- 🌍 **Model respect** for diverse knowledge
- 🌍 **Create systems** that enable participation
- 🌍 **Encourage** curiosity and openness

And perhaps most importantly—

- 🌍 **Leaders must be willing to learn.**

The Courage to Change

It asks us to:

- 🌍 **Let go of control**
- 🌍 **Embrace uncertainty**
- 🌍 **Share responsibility**

But the reward is worth it. Because when we truly engage community expertise, we don't just improve outcomes -

- 🌍 We build **stronger, more resilient communities.**

A Future Built Together

- 🌍 Imagine a future where:
- 🌍 **Services are designed with the people who use them**
- 🌍 **Policies reflect real-life experiences**
- 🌍 **Communities feel heard, valued, and empowered**

In that future, we don't talk about “engaging” communities as an afterthought.

We recognise that:

- 🌍 **Communities are essential partners in creating solutions.**
- 🌍 **Experts are not defined by titles—They are defined by **impact**.**

Why We Sometimes Miss It

- 🌍 We trust qualifications more than experience
- 🌍 Systems are designed **for** people, not **with** people
- 🌍 Jargon
- 🌍 Confidence

A Call to Action

- 🌍 **Who** are the experts around me that I might not be seeing?
- 🌍 **When** was the last time I truly listened—without assumptions?
- 🌍 **How** can I better listen to them?
- 🌍 **What** might change if I involved them earlier and more meaningfully?
- 🌍 **What** barriers can I remove?

A Call to Action

We change what is possible....not by improving services

- 🌍 We **build trust.**
- 🌍 We **strengthen connections.**
- 🌍 We **create solutions that actually matter.**

Closing thoughts

- 🌍 Every community holds knowledge.
- 🌍 Every person holds insight.
- 🌍 Every lived experience has value

They come from many voices working together.

Closing thoughts

- 🌍 Chances are:
- 🌍 You **talked** to people
- 🌍 You **learned** as you went
- 🌍 You **adapted** based on what worked

In other words — **you didn't do it alone.**
And that's exactly how communities work.

Ann Hodson

ash@annhodson.com

+44 (0) 7717712024

infinityfamilylaw.com



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