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A guide to
family, divorce & mediation



Woodfines
SOLICITORS

BEDFORD | BLETCHLEY
CAMBRIDGE | MILTON KEYNES | SANDY

We can help with;

- **Separation** - we can draw up an agreement providing financial security.
- **Divorce** - you will need to convince the court that your marriage has irretrievably broken down.
- **Children** - we will explain conciliation and mediation, and represent you in court if needed.
- **Assets & Finance** - we can help you reach agreements on splitting assets and payment of maintenance.
- **Pre-nuptial agreements**- we can help you clarify responsibilities and determine assets and property that need to be protected.
- **Dissolution of civil partnerships** – we can help same sex couples who are separating
- **Wills** – we can provide specialist advice about estate planning and inheritance for people wishing to regulate their financial affairs following a divorce or separation.
- **Cohabitation agreements** – for those who do not formalise their relationship by marriage or civil partnership. We can help in drafting agreements.



Making sense of Family problems

We understand that issues relating to family law are highly personal and sensitive. This is why we aim to deal with all matters in an understanding and compassionate manner. We always aim to settle matters by negotiation rather than confrontation, in accordance with the best practice guidelines of 'Resolution' (the Solicitors Family Law Association). However, this is not always possible, and should this not be the case you can be sure that you will be represented by one of the Region's leading law firms' and whenever possible you will be represented by the same solicitor from start to finish, to include representation in court.

Our Family Law team can meet you at any of our offices providing a personal accessible service at the time you need it most. We are members of The Law Society Family Panel, the Law Society Family Mediation Panel, the Law Society Children Panel and the Solicitors Association of Higher Court Advocates. If matters between you and your former partner are amicable, you might wish to consider entering into a process of collaborative law. We offer representation by trained specialists in collaborative law.

Our approach

We aim to be conciliatory but firm, practical and will approach your case with a reasoned and realistic attitude and will strive to achieve the best possible outcome for you. We will protect your interests and keep you informed at all times of our progress, together with the likely cost to you of our work.

Our approach is pragmatic and we take care to ensure that you understand any terminology or processes that might relate to your particular case. We are committed to advising you in plain English both in person and in writing.



Divorce or Separation

We understand that deciding to separate is never an easy decision, made even more difficult where children are involved. Our service to you helps ensure that you stay in control and informed as to the process and options available to you.

You may want some initial confidential advice, or you may want to initiate (or respond to) divorce proceedings. We understand how difficult reaching agreements can be on financial settlements or arrangements for children.

Should you not wish to divorce, due to social or religious grounds, we are happy to arrange a judicial separation which still entitles you to petition the court on a range of financial issues.

Cohabitation

We are well aware of the increasing popularity of cohabiting amongst couples and there are many reasons why people in modern society may not choose to marry. However, many people are unaware of the fact that cohabiting couples do not share the same rights as married couples. You may want to consider individual rights at the outset and avoid costly disagreements in the future.

We are also able to advise as to respective claims of former cohabitants on the breakdown of their relationship.

Same sex civil partnerships

The law recently changed to allow same sex partners to register their partnership and to receive rights similar to those of married couples. If a civil partnership breaks down, the court has broad powers to redistribute the couple's assets. We are able to offer expert assistance on issues arising from the breakdown of a civil partnership.

Children

When a relationship breaks down, one of the most difficult things to deal with can be the arrangements for the children. We have successfully represented many clients in connection with;

- Residence (custody)
- Contact (access)
- Specific issue and prohibited steps
- Removal from the country
- Care proceedings (problems with the local authority)

Family Mediation and Collaborative Law

Mediation is a process where couples are encouraged to talk through their problems in the presence of an independent mediator to narrow issues in dispute and, hopefully, resolve their differences entirely. This is not marriage guidance counselling.

Collaborative law helps maintain an amicable dialogue in order to accelerate the legal process and avoid costly, court action. In collaborative law, both parties formally agree not to take the other party to court.

We are able to offer these services to families keen to resolve issues on the breakdown of their relationship in a constructive and positive way. We can help both parties achieve a satisfactory and appropriate resolution outside of the court arena and in doing so keep any acrimony to an absolute minimum.

Domestic Violence

If you are a victim of domestic abuse we can help. If you or a member of your family is a victim of domestic abuse, there are various ways in which we can ensure that the law can be used to help protect you.

We have experience of many types of domestic abuse and have helped people through this traumatic time. We will explain the whole process in plain English and ensure your needs are our first priority.



The next step

The law can appear daunting at the best of times, but when a relationship breaks down or a family problem surfaces, emotions run high and you need to make sure that there is a clear path through to the outcome that is best for YOU.

Call us and we will help make sense of the situation.

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