

When you're dealing with difficulties, finding a solicitor you can trust shouldn't be one of them.

Family and relationships



When emotions are running high, it's easy for your heart to rule your head. Family and relationship issues can be very distressing, and the decisions and actions you take now can have far-reaching effects. So you need help and advice from someone who understands how you're feeling, but can take a sensible, pragmatic view.

Our solicitors qualify on both counts. They're genuinely caring souls who'll offer a shoulder to lean on. And they're extremely experienced in all family matters, from divorce to children's issues to complex financial arrangements. They also liaise closely with solicitors in our other departments when business interests, investments or issues with wills and taxation arise. (Being so efficient also helps get things sorted quickly and keep costs to a minimum.)

All in all, they'll help you see things clearly and make the best decisions for a happy and secure future.

Divorce

Divorce solicitors like ours stop it from being a messy affair.

There's no two ways about it, divorce can be extremely painful. But at least your dealings with us won't be.

Our specialist divorce solicitors combine expertise and experience with a sensitive touch, to guide and reassure you during a difficult time, while securing the best possible outcome for you.

We can advise you on all aspects of separation and divorce, including the cost of divorce, grounds for divorce, finances and arrangements for your children. We always aim to minimise conflict, time and expense, and maximise your emotional welfare and peace of mind.

We'll start things off with a free half hour consultation, so you can think about your options, and advise you on how to move forward.

Cohabitation

Agree your rights in a 'common law' relationship with a cohabitation agreement.

There's a misconception that if you live with a partner in a 'common law' relationship, it automatically entitles you to the same rights as a married couple.

It doesn't

Manchester Office

Units 13-15, Brewery Yard, Deva City Office Park,
Trinity Way, Manchester M3 7BB
T: 0161 832 3304 . F: 0161 834 3568
E: manchester@dbf-law.co.uk

Glossop Office

10 Ellison Street . Glossop . Derbyshire SK13 8BZ
T: 01457 860606 . F: 01457 869468
E: glossop@dbf-law.co.uk

If you split up or one partner dies, the law simply sees it as two people sharing a house, with no special rights in terms of dividing assets, paying maintenance, property share or ownership, being regarded as next of kin or rights of inheritance.

To give you both similar rights to a married couple, we can create a Cohabitation Agreement for you both to sign. (If you're in a same sex couple, you might find a Civil Partnership is the way forward.)

It needs to be done through the proper legal channels, with advice from experienced relationship solicitors, like Davis Blank Furniss. The agreement sets out the rights of each partner and is tailored to your specific partnership. It can cover property ownership, inheritance, agreement on the education of children, ownership of assets, life insurance and nomination in a pension fund or a death in service arrangement.

We'll make sure it's carefully written, so that it's correctly interpreted under the law, so you feel completely reassured about your future.

Financial provision

Resolving financial issues after a separation.

While you're dealing with the emotional impact of your separation, let us help sort out all the nitty gritty, practical details, like where you'll live, how your belongings will be divided, maintenance and custody of your children. We'll help you resolve everything amicably, which should help prevent expensive Court proceedings, and our experienced solicitors will negotiate a suitable settlement.

Children are always our first consideration, to ensure their welfare. We'll also look at the full extent of assets involved, including property, pensions, income, potential earnings and future financial requirements. And we'll consider the circumstances, for example, if either partner is in a new, cohabiting relationship, their new partner's financial affairs may also be taken into account.

We appreciate it's not a pleasant process, but with the right help and guidance, we can make it easier to cope with.

Children's matters

Specialist help to resolve child custody issues and ensure your custody rights and their wellbeing.

Children are the innocent parties in parental separations, so it's vital to make the process as easy on them as possible.

That said, you still need to know your custody rights, to negotiate a custody arrangement you're happy with.

We'll talk you through everything to do with children's matters, including all the different orders set out by The Children Act 1989, all the while focussing on resolving the situation amicably.

Separation agreements

A separation agreement helps keep your split amicable and civilised.

However high emotions are running, approaching a split from a pragmatic point of view will save yourself stress and heartache in the long run.

If you and your partner decide to split, the most sensible thing to do is appoint a solicitor each from the outset.

We can help you set out a separation agreement detailing how you're going to handle financial arrangements, divorce proceedings and the care of any children you have together, so you both understand and agree where you stand and what's going to happen.

The agreement isn't binding, but it can help prevent disputes and ensure everything runs smoothly with no recriminations.

Pre-nuptial agreements

Pre-nuptial agreements can create a firm foundation for a marriage.

No one goes into a marriage assuming it's going to fail. However, the statistics tell us that we can't take anything for granted. And as happy as you are with your husband or wife-to-be, having a pre-nuptial agreement in place can be seen as a safety net, just in case things change.

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The prenup sets out each partner's rights to property, debts, income and other assets if the relationship should end.

Prenups are not automatically enforced by the courts, but when they have been prepared properly by a reputable family law solicitor (like Davis Blank Furniss), courts do take them seriously.

We can chat through your situation and advise you on whether a prenup is appropriate. It may well be the right move if, for example, you've been married before and want to protect yourself from claims regarding previous settlements, you want to avoid a long and costly dispute about who gets what, you have children from a previous marriage and want to ensure they are provided for, or you have significant assets or properties that you want to protect if things were to go wrong.

You and your partner will need to use different solicitors, so that you're both equally represented and everyone agrees that the prenup is fair. And we'll need to take into account changes that may take place once you're married, such as redundancy, inheritances, children, pensions and future assets.

The process can take some time, and needs careful thought, so don't try to rush through it right before your wedding day. Make sure you plan in advance, as it also means the courts are more likely to take the agreement seriously.

A prenup can definitely be worth having, but at the same time, we hope our hard work won't ever be needed.

For further information or a non obligation chat please contact

Kirsty Morbey, Partner on **01457 860606**, email **kirsty.morbey@dbf-law.co.uk**

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