



THE LAW SOCIETY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Marriage or Relationship Difficulties



Published by
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MARRIAGE OR RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES

If your marriage or relationship with your partner has run into difficulty it is important that during such an emotionally vulnerable time that you do not lose or give up your legal rights. Those rights could include financial arrangements, property and access or custody of children.

Most marriages or relationships have their ups and downs but where the breakdown has become or looks as if it will become irreparable then it is time to see a solicitor.

When You See a Solicitor

If you decide to see a Solicitor, the Law Society will be able to provide you with a list of solicitors who are members of the Solicitors Family Law Association (NI). Your solicitor will advise you on whether you qualify for Legal Aid.

Maintenance

Your solicitor will advise you on whether or not you require maintenance for yourself and whether or not you should go to the Magistrate's Court or High Court. You may be able to sign a separation agreement and not go to court. Your solicitor will also advise you about maintenance for children and the Child Support Agency. If you are not married, your rights are very different and your solicitor will advise you of these.

Children

If you can sort out arrangements for your children yourself, the Court in general will not interfere with your decision. If you cannot decide yourselves, you may wish to attend Family Mediation at the Family

Mediation Service, Dublin Road, Belfast (Tel 01232 322914). If you need to go to court, your solicitor will advise you about residence and contact orders. Again if you are not married your rights may be very different and you should seek your solicitor's advice.

Divorce or Judicial Separation

If your marriage has irretrievably broken down and you can show one or more of five legal reasons why this is so, you may apply for a divorce. If you do not wish to proceed for divorce you may wish to apply for judicial separation.

Financial Matters

Your solicitor will advise you about all money matters arising out of the breakdown of your relationship. If you are not married your rights and entitlement will be very different to that of married people. Your solicitor will advise you about division of your house, belongings, savings, pension and all other money matters arising out of the breakdown of your relationship.

Remember

Should you feel that your marriage or relationship is still rescuable the following organisations can offer help and should be approached before beginning the legal process.

Relate 76 Dublin Road, Belfast Phone: 01232 323454

Accord Ormeau Road, Belfast Phone: 01232 491919

Samartians Phone: (0345) 909090