



Information Sheet: Civil Partnerships

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005 and has created a new legal status available only to same-sex couples. Couples who sign a civil partnership registration document commit themselves to a range of rights and responsibilities similar to the rules and legal principles governing marriage and, in turn, the dissolution of civil partnerships is based on divorce principles.

What if my relationship breaks down?

Neither partner can apply to dissolve the partnership until at least one year after the partnership was formed, however, after this time the court may end a civil partnership in a similar way to ending a marriage.

The only ground for dissolution of a civil partnership is that the partnership has broken down irretrievably. If you are applying for a dissolution you must satisfy the court that one or more of four 'facts', apply:

- Behaviour by one party which means that the other party cannot reasonably be expected to live with that person.
- Desertion of one person by the other person for a period of two years.
- Separation for two years and both parties agree to dissolution.
- Separation for five years.

How about money and children?

You are able to obtain from the court the same range of financial orders as those available to divorcing couples.

The court will consider the same factors; the welfare of children under the age of 18, income, earning capacity, property, financial resources, financial obligations, contribution of each partner and duration of partnership.

The court will try to reach a financial settlement on a clean break basis.

Civil partners have the same legal rights as married parents relating to children of the family.

You have the right to apply for residence or contact orders, adoption orders and parental responsibility orders and the court can make orders for you or your former partner to make payments for the benefit of a child of the family.



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