

Is your relationship falling apart?

by Karen Lloyd, **FitzPatricks solicitors**

All too often when relationships break down one, or both, of you is left wondering which way to turn, where to go for the best advice and what to do.

Friends or family who have experienced their own relationship breakdown will try to offer advice but each case is different and your particular circumstances may be different from those offering you advice.

When you have made the decision that you can no longer live with your partner, what are your options?

Initially, you and your partner may decide to just live separately. You may have reached an agreement regarding who is to pay for the mortgage or rent and the other utility bills. You may also have agreed arrangements for any children

you have. This arrangement can continue for so long as you both wish.

The second option is to formally recognise what you and your partner have agreed regarding arrangements for any children and finances in a Separation Agreement. You would need to instruct your own solicitor to advise you on the formalities of such an agreement and to prepare the Separation Agreement.

The third option is a divorce or a civil partnership dissolution for same sex relationships. You may have decided that you do not want a period of separation or you may just decide to delay

until after a period of separation. Before you can issue proceedings, you must have been married or in a civil partnership for 12 months. It usually takes five months to dissolve it. In divorce cases, if you are the Petitioner you may be advised by your solicitor to delay applying for the Decree Absolute until the financial issues of the marriage are resolved. It is the financial matters which usually hold up proceedings not the formalities of the divorce itself.

In the early stages of separation, you may be advised by your solicitor that Mediation is appropriate. An impartial mediator offers guidance and assistance to

separating couples on issues of finance, children and even divorce. Once an agreement has been reached then both couples need to consult their solicitors on the legal formalities of the agreement itself.

Whatever you decide, when facing the prospect of separation from your partner, it is always advisable to consult a solicitor who specialises in family matters and can advise and assist you.

For more information and advice on family matters, contact FitzPatricks solicitors, tel: 01444 870123, www.fitzpatricks-law.co.uk

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