

Our highly experienced Family Team offers expert advice on all aspects of family law.

We can help with all cases ranging from simple and straightforward matters, to the more complex cases, including court proceedings where required.

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## **What we cover:**

From our offices based in Eastbourne, Meads, Polegate and Hailsham, we can help with lots of different issues that you may be facing, including:

- Divorce and Family Finance
- Unmarried Couples
- Civil Partnerships
- Children Matters
- Pre-Nuptial Agreements
- Collaborative Law
- Mediation Services
- Representation in Court Proceedings
- Other (Domestic Violence, Harassment and Injunctions)

## **Why choose Hart Reade?**

Our family lawyers exclusively practice family law and therefore you can have the confidence that your representative has the expertise you need.

We understand the concerns of instructing a solicitor, which can include fears of accumulating high legal costs, daunting terminology and documents and the worry of unnecessary Court proceedings.

- We recommend adopting an amicable but firm approach.
- We tailor our advice to meet your specific objectives, meaning you have control over your case and the level of our involvement.

- We believe it is essential for us to provide you with costs information at the outset of your case and for every important decision, we will advise you as to the likely cost consequences to help you make informed and cost-effective decisions.
- Our diverse Family Team means that we can offer different lawyers to suit your specific needs.

## ***Divorce and Family Finance***

The majority of divorces (including Civil Partnerships) are pursued without the need for any attendance at Court. We aim to agree the divorce with your spouse at the outset and more often than not cases are resolved amicably and by agreement. This can be achieved even in the most difficult of cases.

We offer specialist advice on both large and small cases, with different lawyers available to suit your case. We can advise as to the consequences of divorce, and upon all financial matters including property, investments, pensions, maintenance (including clean breaks) and tax issues etc.

We will assist you in negotiating settlement or represent you in formal proceedings if required.

Many people do not realise even though they are divorced their financial claims against each other could remain open. We recommend securing a binding settlement to secure certainty and peace of mind for the future. This can be difficult to achieve without the assistance of a specialist solicitor.

Our experienced lawyers will give you clear and practical advice with a focus on keeping costs to a minimum and ensuring matters are dealt with amicably and swiftly.

## ***Unmarried Couples***

With more and more couples living together it has never been so important to protect yourself financially and there are a number of ways this can be achieved.

We offer advice on the following:

- When you buy a house - protecting your share or defining your respective interests.
- When you cohabit - protecting an existing property share or interest.

- If you separate - pursuing a financial interest in a property. This can be achieved even if the property is not held in joint names, subject to your circumstances.
- Cohabitation Agreements - to protect both parties when they start living together.
- Separation Agreements - to formalise your financial arrangements.

## **Children**

It is essential in children matters to obtain early advice from a specialist and experienced lawyer to ensure your children's best interests are protected.

We provide specialist practical advice in relation to children matters, to include assisting you to agree with whom the child should live (previously known as residence) and with whom the child should spend time (previously known as Contact). We are also able to advise and assist you set up a shared care arrangement. Many cases are capable of agreement following reasoned and sensible advice and without the need for Court involvement. Unfortunately, there are cases where a referral to the Court is necessary and we will be able to represent you in those proceedings and will safeguard the interests of you and your children throughout.

Where appropriate we also specialise in the suspension or limitation of Contact, extending Contact Arrangements, removal of a child from the country (both permanent and for holidays), change of schools, change of name and all matters relating to Parental Responsibility.

## ***Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)***

We offer specialist and objective advice on all aspects of ADR to ensure you can make an informed decision as to the best way to resolve your case swiftly, amicably and hopefully without the need for Court proceedings.

Solicitor assisted settlement is a popular, successful and cost-effective method of ADR in which you chose our level of involvement (for example simply implementing a settlement you have reached directly or helping you with the negotiations).

We regularly negotiate settlements by corresponding with your partner's legal representatives on your behalf, with the sole aim of achieving a fair settlement.

We will review and discuss the merits of the different forms of ADR with you to ensure you chose the right one for you.

## **Mediation**

Mediation is often a good way of resolving matters directly with your spouse.

Mediation involves an independent third party (a mediator) who acts as an umpire to facilitate the discussions between you and your former partner to try to assist you reach an agreement. The mediator will speak to you and your partner separately at first and then aim to get you both round a table to talk about your options and ultimately reach an agreement that works for you both.

However, the mediator cannot give specific legal advice and it impartial. Therefore, it is essential to receive advice from a lawyer alongside your negotiations at mediation – although it is important to be aware that your lawyer cannot attend mediation with you.

## **Collaborative Law**

Some clients find that traditional mediation (where lawyers do not attend) is not suitable to their case and prefer to pursue a collaborative approach. Collaborative law is often described as 'mediation with representation' and has a high success rate.

Collaborative law is a form of negotiation in which the separating couple and their lawyers commit to resolving matters, without Court involvement.

With collaborative law, you and your former partner sit round the table with your lawyers (who must be collaboratively trained) and work out a resolution together. The aim is to achieve a fair solution for everyone – putting the children first.

Although collaborative law is not for everybody, in those cases where parties feel able to work with their former partner, it is an excellent and cost-effective way of resolving matters without court action.

At Hart Reade we have three collaboratively trained family lawyers who can assist you, if you choose this approach.

## Free Initial Appointment

We offer an initial free 30 minute appointment to all clients so that we can give you preliminary advice and review your case. Please call us to arrange a no obligation appointment.

## Contact *Hart Reade*

If you wish to speak to any of the family law team, please call us on **01323 727321**, visit our website [www.hartreade.co.uk](http://www.hartreade.co.uk) or email us on [info@hartreade.co.uk](mailto:info@hartreade.co.uk).

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This information sheet is intended to be a summary only and should not be treated as a comprehensive guide and should not be acted on without qualified legal advice. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Hart Reade and we will be happy to assist.

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