

FINDING THE RIGHT DIVORCE LAWYER

According to the Office for National Statistics earlier this month, almost half of all marriages in England and Wales will end in divorce if current trends continue. Karen Mayes, Director at law firm HRJ Law, advises on how to choose a good lawyer to help you through the process.

The decision to divorce or to end a relationship is rarely taken lightly. When you are emotionally vulnerable it can be very hard to get perspective on the situation and to make the best decisions. This is a time when you need support not only from friends and family but also from professionals if you are to walk away from the relationship in the best legal, financial and emotional state. So, when a relationship ends you will almost certainly need legal advice from a family lawyer.

When you are choosing a lawyer remember you don't just need someone who is good at their job, you need someone you feel you can trust. If your divorce drags out you could be seeing them regularly for a couple of years. Choose a lawyer with whom you like interacting and can establish a good relationship.

Ask around for recommendations from your friends, office colleagues, neighbours and relatives. Otherwise contact Resolution – First for Family Law www.resolution.org.uk, an association of matrimonial lawyers who work with a code of practice designed to help you come to a settlement in a positive and conciliatory, rather than overly litigious, way. As a rule, always go for a lawyer who specialises in family law. Do not take your case to a general, jack-of-all-



Hitchin Office, 7/8 Portmill Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1AS
Tel: 01462 628888 | Fax: 01462 631233

Welwyn Garden City Office, Gate House, Fretherne Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 6RD
Tel: 01707 887700 | Fax: 01707 887701

www.hrjlaw.co.uk

trades legal professional. Specialisation can beat general knowledge any day in effectiveness.

Most good solicitors will start off by asking if you can be reconciled. Take your time and try to avoid hasty decisions. Even if there is no prospect of a reconciliation, if you think you can be even the smallest bit amicable about your divorce you might want to consider mediation (where both parties meet with an independent mediator, who does not give legal advice but works with the parties to try and work out amicable solutions for you both). Alternatively you might wish to try something new – collaborative law. This is a process whereby lawyers and their clients agree not to go to court but to work out a settlement themselves. In court arguments can become exaggerated and positions can become polarised, making the whole process even more difficult.. The collaborative process still gives the parties the benefit of legal advice but tries to avoid the acrimony as much as possible by having the two parties meet t around a table with their lawyers and talk it out until they have a sensible settlement.

Finally remember choosing a good lawyer is a decision that has to be taken with utmost caution and after due research. That way you will have the best chance of achieving your aim which is to agree on future arrangements so that you are both able to leave your relationship with dignity and move on to the new life waiting for you.

Karen Mayes is an Accredited Specialist with Resolution and a Resolution trained Collaborative Lawyer.