

Divorce Checklist



1. Don't agree anything yet. You may be tempted to agree a settlement quickly before you've had legal advice to keep things simple and avoid arguments. We rarely see an exact 50/50 split of the assets. In addition, assets can be valued in different ways, so it is important to get a solicitor to check that they have been correctly and fairly valued. There may also be assets you are unaware of or hadn't thought about. It could be that your spouse is not disclosing all their assets, or you may have overlooked things that could add a significant amount to your overall settlement.

2. Don't put yourself at a disadvantage. Steps you take in these early stages may seriously impact on your future. For example, if you move out of the house without your children, then you may find it very difficult to arrange for them to live with you in the future. If you agree to receive too little money in the interim, and you can just survive on that, it might be much more difficult to argue that you should receive more later.

3. Prepare a background document. Prepare a summary of the important background for your first meeting with your divorce lawyer.

This will save time and allow more time in the first meeting to be spent on discussing your options. This should include as many of the following as

possible (don't worry if you don't know some of the answers):

Basic information

- Contact information - your name, address, phone and email address.
- Key dates - your date of birth, your spouse's date of birth, and the date of your marriage. If possible, bring your marriage certificate.
- Children (if any) - names, dates of birth, schools.
- Previous marriages - if either of you has been married before, details of when you got divorced and what was done about financial settlement and children.
- Which of you has asked for the divorce, and why.
- If you have already separated, when.
- Any letters you have had from any solicitor regarding the divorce.
- Whether either of you has a new relationship.
- Any urgent concerns - for example, arrangements for the children, domestic abuse, or hiding of assets.

- A list of the things that you're most worried about – for example, the children, having enough money to live on.

Your priorities

- What are hoping to achieve as your best-case outcome?
- Is there anything else particularly important to you?
- Does anything that you know of need dealing with urgently? For example, if you think your spouse might be planning to dispose of assets.

A summary of what you know about the assets and incomes of both of you (NB do not access any documents addressed solely to your spouse to find out this information)

- Income and employment – employment details for both of you, including income (if known).
- Any non-employment income either of you have (for example, from savings).
- Property – an estimate of its value and details of any mortgage on the property.

- Savings and investments – including any pensions.
- Other assets – any other valuable property or possessions.
- Debts – for example, personal loans and credit cards.
- Any special circumstances – such as inheritances received or any which are very imminent.

4. Find a good divorce solicitor.



Check the following:



Choose a solicitor or firm independently ranked as a leading family lawyer or firm. Chambers and Partners, and the Legal 500, are two independent guides which rank individual lawyers and firms after an extensive research process involving interviews with barristers, solicitors and clients.



Do they offer a free initial telephone chat? This is important so you can get a feel for them and they can understand more about what is worrying you.



Will they tell you if they aren't the right fit for you and your situation? Honesty and transparency are really important.



Don't waste your time having a free first meeting. When was the last time you got something for free that was actually worth having?

- Do they offer a 1-hour, fixed fee meeting? A first meeting takes an hour. This is so you can discuss your situation and concerns in detail, and then the options to sort things out can be discussed thoroughly.
- Don't waste your time having the free 30-minute meeting which most solicitors offer. 30 minutes isn't nearly long enough to deal with such an important meeting.

About the Author

My name is Andrew Meehan and I am a solicitor and the Managing Director of Harrogate Family Law.

I have 20 years' experience of sorting out the very trickiest divorces and getting great results for my clients.

The people I help usually need my help because:

- they have a difficult spouse (often a narcissist);
- assets and income are being hidden from them;
- their asset base exceeds £1m;
- there are other complicating features such as: businesses, pensions, properties, trusts and/or high incomes.

I am an expert negotiator. I stand up for my clients and fight their corner so they get what they're entitled to - a fair split of the assets and income.

I am top-ranked each year by the Chambers Legal Directory as a leading family law solicitor. Some recent comments are:

- "Has the ability to put you at ease and help you understand how they are going to deal with the situation throughout the various stages of a divorce." (2019 edition)

- “Well reputed for his experience in advising high net worth individuals...pragmatic and sensible”. (2018 edition)
- His “technical ability and cut to the chase approach make him stand out”. (2016 edition)

I am also recommended by the other guide to the legal profession, the Legal 500. Recent comments about me are:

- “Andrew Meehan is exceptionally knowledgeable and experienced and particularly adroit at ensuring the commerciality of outcomes. His advice is holistic 360 degree advice and is usually spot on”. (2020 edition)
- “Very thorough in [his] handling of cases, and a good listener to boot”. (2017 edition)

You are only likely to get divorced once in your life. So please don't leave your future and your financial security to chance by getting a solicitor who is not the very best at what they do.

Give me a call on **01423 594 680** for a free, no-obligation chat, or email me at:
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