



JOHN HODGE SOLICITORS: LEGAL GUIDESHEET – Making The Most Of your Legal Advice.

Family legal problems can have complex and unforeseen consequences for couples and their children. In these situations there is no substitute for professional advice from a lawyer who will look at your particular circumstances and help you resolve the situation in a constructive and sensitive way.

The first step is choosing the right solicitor for you - someone who will provide reliable advice and understands that when decisions need to be made, they must be your decisions. They should also help you understand the consequences of decisions you take. A member of Resolution would be your best choice.

If your problem is urgent e.g. domestic abuse, child abuse, child abduction or disposal of assets, explain this when you make the appointment.

Before your appointment, think about the advice you need. You might find it helpful to make a note of the questions you want to ask so that you don't forget anything. It will help your solicitor if you collect together any documents or information you think might be useful.

If you have children, it would be better if you could ask a reliable friend or relative to look after them or collect them from school whilst you are seeing the solicitor. That way you can concentrate on finding out what you want to know.

At your first meeting, you can expect;

- an outline advice on the various ways of resolving your problem including using mediation and/or negotiation alongside court proceedings;

- a discussion about fees and the limited availability of legal aid. Legal fees are related to the amount of time the case actually takes, but your solicitor should be able to give an estimate;
- an outline of the timescale for the work involved. This will vary according to your individual circumstances and the complexity of the problem.

After the first meeting, it may be difficult to remember all that is said. Sometimes it can be helpful to make notes as you go along or you could ask the solicitor to confirm their advice in a letter.

If you decide to instruct the solicitor to act for you, the solicitor will give advice and you instruct him or her in the light of that advice. The solicitor will write letters and deal with court proceedings on your behalf and on your instructions. You should agree whether you want letters to be sent to you at your home address or somewhere else. You should agree with your solicitor the best way of keeping in touch - through telephone calls or further meetings - in order to keep costs to the minimum.

Although it might seem obvious, you should tell your solicitor everything that is relevant to the problem. The advice he or she gives is based on the information he or she has at the time.

At **John Hodge Solicitors** all members of the Family Team are members of Resolution (including accredited specialists) and members of the Law Society's Family Lawyers Panel.