



QualitySolicitors

Relationship Breakdown

Proud to support



Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

501



Quality
Solicitors

“You just don’t know if a law firm is any good until it’s too late! I started the QualitySolicitors legal brand after having a terrible experience of using a lawyer myself. Even though I’m a barrister, I didn’t know who to choose when it came to my own legal issues. In the end, I chose badly - my lawyer never kept me updated and hardly ever returned my calls. The stress it caused was awful. Sadly, that experience is all too common.

Using a QualitySolicitors firm is like having a lawyer recommended to you by hundreds of trusted friends. That’s because we only select firms to become part of QualitySolicitors that have consistently excellent feedback from their clients. I am certain that by choosing QualitySolicitors to represent you, you will have a much better experience than I did with my lawyer!”

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to be 'Craig Holt'.

Craig Holt

Chief Executive
QualitySolicitors

What is QualitySolicitors?

QualitySolicitors is a national legal service with branches all across the UK. QualitySolicitors is made up of many of the UK's best law firms who have come together to create a national legal brand.

Before they can join, law firms are chosen from fierce local competition. Only the best firms are selected to become part of QualitySolicitors - based on what you, the public, tell us about them.

QualitySolicitors is delighted to be a member of the Institute of Customer Service. We are determined to improve standards of customer service in the legal market. Everything we do is designed to make life easier and less stressful for you when dealing with legal matters. Our aim is to drag the legal profession into the 21st century!

Our lawyers are experts in their legal areas but, unlike some, don't believe they have to use complicated legal jargon to prove how good they are. That's why QualitySolicitors are proud members of the Plain English Campaign.



Why use QualitySolicitors for your divorce/separation?

QualitySolicitors aim to provide the very best in customer service. With locations throughout the UK, we combine the strength and expertise of a national brand with the convenience of a local service.

Expert lawyers...

QualitySolicitors' Family Law lawyers are specialists, experienced in getting the best outcome for you ...**providing the best service**

All QualitySolicitors offer the following key promises:

1. Free First Consultation

Most people don't use a lawyer very often. We know it can sometimes be a worrying and unknown process. Call us or pay a visit to your local QualitySolicitors branch – all at no cost. You'll find friendly staff who genuinely want to help you with whatever your legal issue is.

Your Free First Consultation is your chance to tell us a bit about your legal issue, ask any questions you have and decide whether QualitySolicitors feels right for you. No question is too stupid and it is all completely without obligation. At QualitySolicitors, there is no need to worry about being charged the moment you step through the door!

2. Same-day response

You're busy. You don't want to wait around for days for someone to get in touch or update you on your case. Call or email us and you'll get a response the very same day.

3. No hidden costs

With QualitySolicitors you will always be kept informed of any charges in a clear and easily understandable way right from the outset. From our popular "Ask the Legal Expert" fixed price legal consultation to many of our other legal services, we also offer a wide range of fixed fee services. With this promise, we can ensure there are no nasty surprises when it comes to any fees.

4. Direct lawyer contact

If you instruct us you will want to speak with the actual lawyer running your case. Just pick up the phone. At QualitySolicitors you will not be left feeling fobbed off or having to press 1 for customer service, 2 for accounts, 3 for ...ZZZZZ...



Why should I use QualitySolicitors?

We believe no-one in the entire legal market is more passionate than us about providing the very highest levels of customer service. Our specialist lawyers understand that their legal expertise is just half of the equation and that taking care to ensure the service they provide is as good as their legal ability is equally important.

Whether you are part of a couple living together (cohabiting), married or in a Civil Partnership you will want the very best from your legal representation at this difficult time.

Right from the start, with your **Free First Consultation** (which can be by phone or face to face with one of our legal assistants) we understand just how difficult it may be to take the first step in contacting a law firm. We also understand the need for confidentiality and agreeing the best way for one of our expert lawyers to contact you.

QualitySolicitors' Family Law lawyers are specialists who are particularly skilled at negotiating. They have a range of skills at their disposal including mediation and collaborative law (for couples who seek an amicable separation). Where necessary they are also skilled in using the legal system to fight on your behalf. It all comes down to understanding your aims and then working to obtain the best outcome for you.

Whether you have millions of pounds of assets to be divided or are struggling to work out how to simply afford somewhere for you both to live following separation, you will get the same total dedication from our specialists. If there are children involved this often adds considerably to the emotion of the situation and we will work sensitively with you to achieve your aims for them. We'll keep you informed and updated throughout your case and by whatever method suits you best – phone, email, text and even the occasional old-fashioned letter! You will never be left in the dark (thanks to our 'Same Day Response') or be made to feel like your requests for updates are an inconvenience. Our lawyers understand how stressful separation can be. You want to know what's happening and be able to discuss practical outcomes, not be overloaded with legal jargon. With QualitySolicitors that's exactly how things are done: plain English and good communication.



Ok. Sounds good but what will it cost?

Ask your local QualitySolicitors for details of their charges. They'll ensure, right from the outset, you are given clear, straightforward information about the cost of trusting your case to QualitySolicitors.

If yours is just a cautious first enquiry (to find out where you stand) we offer a popular fixed price 'Ask the Legal Expert' session. Please ask for details.



Could I get it cheaper somewhere else?

Of course – although be wary of the hidden costs of many “Online Divorce” companies. QualitySolicitors’ service is excellent value but there’s always a cheaper option for everything and legal services are no different. The legal outcome of your separation, especially if there are financial issues or child contact/residence issues at stake, will impact on you for the rest of your life. Not all law firms are like QualitySolicitors. The quality of your lawyer can make all the difference to the final result. It is vital you get proper, expert representation when going through a separation and a high level of service. This is one time in your life where cutting corners could prove to be a real false economy!



Do I even need a lawyer? We’ve agreed everything...

The fact you have managed to come to an agreement is a really positive start. Where agreement is possible it will save legal costs and an unnecessary dispute. Our lawyers will work with you to resolve matters in the way that is best for you. Even if you agree, a judge has to have the final say for an agreement to be effective. Our lawyers will be able to advise you so that you do not agree something now, only to find out that it isn’t valid years later. They will also provide advice so you will know whether you are agreeing to something that is much less than you should be entitled to. By getting professional advice you will make sure that you don’t end up with problems in the future.



What exactly happens?

The legal process involved in separation can seem quite complicated. For a married couple the divorce process still uses lots of Latin terms such as “decree nisi” that do not mean anything to anyone except lawyers!

For same-sex couples, “dissolution” of a Civil Partnership follows very much the same procedure but with terms such as “conditional order”.

For couples who are simply living together (cohabiting) the law is completely different.

We can advise you further on what will happen in your particular case when we know more about your situation and what you want to achieve.




The actual divorce or dissolution

For married couples the process is known as “divorce” and for same-sex couples in a Civil Partnership it is called a “dissolution”. The person starting the process is called the “petitioner” and the other person the “respondent”. The process is started by your lawyer writing to your partner explaining you are seeking a divorce or dissolution giving your reason known as “grounds”:

THIS CAN BE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Your husband or wife has committed adultery (not available for Civil Partnerships)
- Your husband or wife or Civil Partner’s behaviour is such that you cannot reasonably be expected to live with them
- Your husband or wife or Civil Partner left you at least two years ago without good reason
- You have been separated from your husband or wife or Civil Partner for two years and they agree to the divorce /dissolution; or
- You have been separated from your husband or wife or Civil Partner for five years or more

THERE ARE THEN THE FOLLOWING STAGES:

- Petition**  A formal document setting out the ‘Grounds’ and other details including details of your plans for any children.
- Reply**  The ‘respondent’ will reply to the petition setting out whether they agree or not to the divorce/dissolution and the Grounds.
- Conditional order**  A judge will look over the paperwork and, if happy with everything, grant a conditional order. With a divorce this is known as a “decree nisi”. This is the court saying that the divorce or dissolution can go ahead but isn’t finalised yet. If the respondent does not agree to the divorce/dissolution then a hearing may be needed at court for a judge to determine the final outcome.
- Final Order** This can’t happen until at least six weeks after the conditional order. The final order means that you are legally separated. With divorcing couples it is called a “decree absolute”. Often the final order is delayed until any financial arrangements are finalised.

Financial arrangements

The actual divorce or dissolution process can often be relatively straightforward, in a legal sense. What is often much more difficult is dividing the assets and sorting out who will live where and who will get what. This sorting out of finances is called “application for a financial order” although some lawyers will still use the old term “ancillary relief”. This is a complicated area of law where you will really benefit from your expert representation.

THE BASIC STAGES FOR DIVORCE OR DISSOLUTION:

Mediation



The court will want to see that the parties have attempted to resolve the issues before starting legal proceedings. We can assist and advise on the mediation stage.

Application



This is made on what is called “Form A” and explains that you want the court to decide upon financial arrangements.

Form E



At least 35 days before the first hearing in court both parties must complete a document which provides full details of their financial circumstances, called a “Form E”. You will also need, with your solicitor, at least 2 weeks before the hearing to decide what questions to ask of the other side after having seen their form E. This is where your lawyer's skill and experience is invaluable, especially if you believe the other side have not provided full and open details of everything.

First Directions Appointment



This is often known as an ‘FDA’. It is a hearing where the court will try and work out what the real issues are that the court will have to decide and will also determine what questions each party should be allowed to ask the other. The judge will also decide what other evidence is necessary, such as valuations of properties, businesses etc.

Financial Dispute Resolution



This hearing, often abbreviated to ‘FDR’ is a hearing at which the judge will try and help you and the other side reach an agreement. It will be a negotiation rather than a ‘trial’. The particular judge will not have any further involvement after this hearing so they will play an active role in the discussions.

Final Hearing

If the parties can't reach an agreement at the FDR then a final hearing will take place for the parties to put their positions and evidence before a judge who will determine what final orders should be made.



What can the judge decide?

There are a wide range of orders a judge can make. They can order that one-off sums be paid from one party to another, they can require regular payments to be made, they can make orders about ownership or possession of houses and other assets and they can make orders about who should have the benefit of any pension.



What about couples who just lived together?

For couples who were never married or in a Civil Partnership the law is completely different. You may be referred to as co-habitees or cohabitants and will have fewer legal remedies available when you separate.

In particular, the legal position concerning property is complex. Evidence as to who paid or contributed what can be very important. This is an area where specialist legal advice can prove essential.



What am I entitled to?

That really depends on your particular circumstances – each case is very different. Visit your nearest QualitySolicitors and we will be able to advise you about your particular position.



What about our child/children?

Deciding on the arrangements for any children is a difficult and often emotional area. Your QualitySolicitors specialist can advise you on the range of possible outcomes and work with you to achieve your aims for them.



I have more questions!

To get the ball rolling call your local QualitySolicitors.

The first step is a Free First Consultation. This is with a friendly legal assistant who understands that taking this first step can be difficult. They will put you at ease and take your basic details together with essential information. They will also discuss with you what you are aiming to achieve. If you would prefer to set out this information yourself they will be able to direct you to our online 15 minute Fact Finder Form. This First Consultation is at no charge and with no obligation.

We will then arrange for you to be called back (at a time convenient to you) by one of our expert Family Law lawyers. At QualitySolicitors we think it is really important for you to find the lawyer that is right for you. This is your chance to find out more. The lawyer calling you back will be only too happy to answer any questions you have about the process, our service and legal costs. Again we make no charge for this and it is entirely without obligation - as we want our clients to be happy with their choice of lawyer.



Ask the Legal Expert Session

It may be that you are not yet ready to instruct solicitors to start the legal process. Instead you may be at the stage where you would like a one-off meeting with a specialist lawyer to obtain general advice on where you stand, the options open to you and, in general terms, what the likely outcome would be.

We offer this popular service of a focused 45 minutes with a specialist lawyer for a special fixed price. If it sounds as though this is the service that is right for you the lawyer will give you more details when calling you back.



Ok. I'm sold – I definitely want QualitySolicitors' expert lawyers to act on my behalf. What now?

Just phone or call into your into your local QualitySolicitors or visit us so that we can get things started for you with the Free First Consultation.





QualitySolicitors

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