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Your questions answered

PREPARING FOR A FIRST DIVORCE LAWYER MEETING

The purpose of this Stowe guide is to help prepare you for your first meeting with a divorce lawyer, which can feel overwhelming. It's the point when your personal journey to divorce meets the world of family law and legal processes. A daunting new territory for many.

Facing the unknown at a difficult stage in your life, you're bound to have many questions and concerns.

But don't panic. Your first meeting with a lawyer should be a positive experience. In this article, we will provide valuable tips to help you make the most of your initial consultation and ensure a productive discussion with your divorce lawyer.

First, think about your objectives

Before your meeting with a divorce lawyer, clarify your objectives. For example:

- What do you want to learn about your rights and entitlements?
- Are you seeking guidance on your next steps and available options?

- Do you need to check specific aspects of the legal process?
- Are you uncertain about the future of your relationship and seeking advice ahead of separation?
- Do you want to meet your potential lawyer to gauge whether they're right for you?

These questions will help you focus on your priorities during the first meeting.

Prepare a summary of your circumstances

Preparation is key to getting the most from your first appointment. To gain a comprehensive understanding of your situation, your divorce lawyer will need details about your family life and what has led you to seeking advice.

If you have children and you will be making arrangements with the other parent, then it's useful to identify any specific objectives or concerns now. It's also helpful to flag whether or not you think you'll need support negotiating child arrangements with your co-parent.

Providing a background to your marital finances, including value and ownership of assets, mortgages, investments, pensions, businesses, income and debts, will help form an initial understanding of what financial matters are to be resolved.

Try to gather as much information as you can but don't worry if you don't have access to your partner's personal accounts or files. Come to the meeting with what you know already.

Prepare information such as:

- Personal details (name, address, etc.)
- Marriage details, including the date of marriage and separation
- Information about children (names, ages, and relevant concerns)
- Summary of assets, liabilities, and financial matters
- Share details of arrangements such as nuptial agreements or court orders.

Your first meeting with a divorce lawyer

If you can, use this first meeting with your divorce lawyer to communicate what is important to you, what issues you want to prioritise, and what you want your future to look like. However, if the future feels uncertain and you don't know where to begin, that's okay too. That's where your divorce lawyers' experience and expertise can help.

It's also important for your lawyer to know whether or not you still get along with your ex or if there have been any instances of animosity, or aggressive or controlling behaviour. This can help inform the options that are available to you.

It's likely this is the first time you've spoken to a divorce lawyer, so take the opportunity to ask questions and get the full benefit from their expertise and experience. Your lawyer will explain what the legal processes involve and how they will support you, without overloading you with complex information or jargon.

On the day of your meeting, expect to:

- Discuss the information gathered ahead of the meeting
- Clarify your goals and priorities
- Assess the feasibility of your expectations
- Discuss the nature of your relationship with your ex-partner
- Explore alternative dispute resolution options, such as mediation or collaborative family law.

Need more information?

Call our Client Care Team on **0330 838 7456** to speak with one of our specialist family lawyers or visit www.stowefamilylaw.co.uk

At the end of your first meeting

It is important that you leave the meeting reassured and better informed than when you went in.

While no divorce lawyer can promise that all the information you receive will be good news, you can be assured that advice given will be bespoke, realistic and directly related to your personal circumstances.

After the meeting

It's rare for there to be reason to rush into the next steps. It is important that you consider things carefully and move forward at your own pace.

However, if your circumstances do require urgent action your lawyer will explain this.

Five more tips for getting the most from your divorce lawyer:

1. **Be Honest:** Honest communication is crucial. Disclose all relevant information, even if it may seem uncomfortable. Complete transparency helps your lawyer build a stronger case and provide realistic expectations.
2. **Outline Goals:** Clearly define your objectives for seeking legal support. Whether it's divorce itself, child arrangements, or financial resolutions, having a clear understanding of your goals will help your lawyer provide tailored advice.
3. **Consider Long-Term Implications:** Family law decisions can have long-term consequences. Discuss the potential impact of legal outcomes on your future and make decisions with your long-term well-being in mind.
4. **Establish a Rapport:** Trust and open communication are the foundations for a successful client-lawyer partnership. Feel free to ask about their approach and experience in similar cases.
5. **Ask Questions:** Don't hesitate to ask questions about the legal process, options available to you, and potential outcomes. Building a clear understanding of your case will empower you to make informed decisions.



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