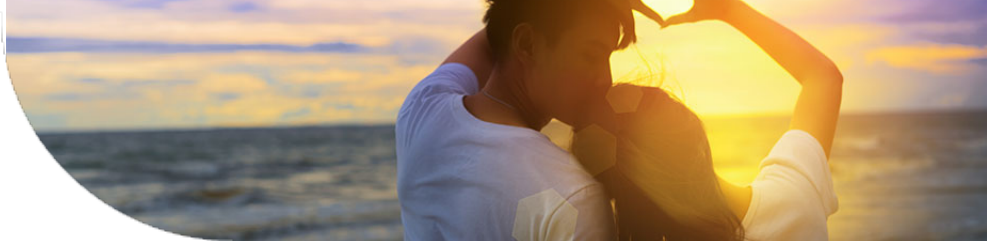

Civil Partnerships, Popping the Question; but Which Question?

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With Valentine's Day approaching, many couples will be thinking about the future and some will be wanting to make a legal, but not necessarily religious, commitment to each other. With marriage rates on the wane, what question should they be popping?

Until 31st December 2019, there was only one choice for heterosexual couples - marriage. For same sex couples, they already had been given the choice of a civil partnership or marriage, with many of them opting for the former. This opportunity was extended to mixed sex couples from the beginning of this year and it is estimated that 84,000 mixed sex couples will now choose to form civil partnerships.

Marriage does not always fit with everyone's ideologies. For example, for those who see marriage as being steeped in patriarchal tradition, where women are "given away" by their fathers and promise to "obey" their husbands, the concept of a civil partnership will be much more appealing. Remaining a so-called "common law" husband or wife can be equally unattractive. This terminology, which is often used to refer to couples who cohabit but are not married, does not confer on them any legal rights. When the relationship breaks down, possibly many years later (and even after children), the more vulnerable party - who may not have any assets to their name - can be left destitute. Their legal rights are no different from that of a single person.

A civil partnership can be an attractive alternative to many since it is a legally recognised relationship, offering many of the same benefits as a conventional marriage in terms of tax benefits, pension, inheritance and in the event that the relationship breaks down but without the religious connotations.

For more information, please contact our civil partnership solicitors in our Bournemouth, Southampton and London offices. Get in touch by emailing online.enquiries@la-law.com or by calling 01202786161.

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