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# Family law reform – civil partnerships for all



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A welcome change to family law coming in May 2019 will allow mixed-sex couples the option of entering into a civil partnership, instead of a traditional marriage.

Same sex couples have had the choice of whether they want to marry, enter into a civil partnership or convert their civil partnership into marriage since the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. The law currently doesn't allow heterosexual couples to enter a civil partnership; a law which many believe is outdated in modern society.

The Supreme Court ruled in June 2018 that the Government's refusal to allow opposite sex couples to have civil partnerships was "incompatible" with human rights law.

The introduction of the [Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths \(Registration etc.\) Act 2019](#), which comes into force on 26 May 2019, removes this restriction, meaning heterosexual couples will now have the choice between marriage and civil partnerships when formalising their relationship. This means, those who previously didn't want to get married, for whatever reason, will have the opportunity to enter into a civil partnership instead.

The Act also seeks to modernise the approach taken in registering marriages. The changes intend to provide a new system whereby all marriage documents are stored in a central electronic register.

A provision is also to be made to allow the registration of the names of the mother of each party to a marriage or civil partnership. Previously only the father of each party was registered, an aspect to the institution of marriage which many perceive as being archaic and outdated.

However, this development, whilst a step forward for equality, does not address the issue of the legal rights (or lack thereof) cohabiting couples and this remains a concern. You can read more about the [rights of unmarried couples here](#).

*If you have any questions on how the new Act may affect you, please contact [the Family Law team](#) at Lester Aldridge.*