

# REGLER & COMPANY

## SOLICITORS

### Explaining the costs of family legal advice

**We think it is really important that you understand what we charge for and how much the costs will be.**

*This guide is here to help you make an informed choice as to whether you wish to engage us and you may want to use it to cross check any other lawyers you are thinking of using.*

#### **The £50.00 Initial Interview**

The initial interview is a chance for you to tell one of our qualified lawyers about your family legal problem. Our lawyers will give you clear advice that helps you begin to make sense of the options. You might want to ask about divorce, relationship breakdown, problems over the children, or problems about a fair share of the family assets. The key thing about the interview is that at the end of it, you have an idea about where you stand on the issues but without having a commitment or obligation to use us as your lawyers.

Our initial interview **only costs £50.00** and usually lasts about an hour, but can take longer if that is needed to really explore the problems. It will always **only cost £50.00**, no matter how long it takes.

#### **Full Representation service**

After the initial interview, you may decide you need a lawyer to deal with the whole of the case for you. With the full representation service we progress your case by writing all the letters and ensuring that letters about your case are written to us, not to you directly. We draft the forms needed. If it is a complex form we show you a draft copy so we can be sure we have it completely right.

If court proceedings are necessary, we will either represent you ourselves, using our qualified Solicitor Advocate. Alternatively we may recommend a Barrister for you if the case is too far away or we are unavailable for the Court date.

We telephone you or call you when we need to ask you what you would like the next steps to be (lawyers sometimes call this "asking for your instructions") and we keep you informed of the progress of the case.

We will arrange payment for extra items (disbursements) that do not form part of our services but that we have to buy on your behalf. For example a court fee, a barrister's fee or obtaining a copy marriage certificate. Things like photocopying and postage are included in the services we provide and we do not charge for those items.

Our hourly rate for our specialist consultant Solicitor-Advocate is £180.00. Each hour is broken down into a 6 minute unit costing £18 per unit and, like many firms, we charge for the time spent on your matter. It is not unusual for a fully represented family matter to cost several thousand pounds and you should expect to be billed £500- £1000 very month.

You will be asked to put money “on account” so that our costs can be taken once the bill is ready to be submitted. Our bill set out clearly what we have done with the time you have paid for as well as any disbursements you have paid for.

You will receive a terms and condition letter that sets out an estimate of the total cost that is tailored to your case.

### **Fixed fees**

We offer fixed fees for divorce cases and for representation in court.

Our divorce fees are currently £600 if you are bringing the divorce case (known as being the Petitioner) or £300 if you are the person receiving the divorce from your spouse (known as being the Respondent). Please ask for our separate leaflet detailing this payment method.

Our Court representation fees are agreed with you on a case by case basis. Please contact us for further details.

### **Pay As You Go service**

For many clients, there is a mixture of things to deal with and the dilemma is this: The fixed fee for divorce is attractive but there are issues of children and finances to be sorted out. The idea of handing the case over to a lawyer seems too expensive so where does that leave a client who needs access to legal advice but at an affordable price?

Our Pay As You Go (PAYG) method may provide the answer and is very popular with many of our clients.

Everybody is entitled to conduct their own case if they want to and there is no law that says you must have a lawyer representing you. Our PAYG method means that you are responsible for the conduct of the litigation and you will come to us for advice as and when you think it necessary. Some of the key features of the service are as follows:

1. You receive face to face advice from our specialist consultant family Solicitor-Advocate.
2. You only pay for the time you use in your meeting. There is no bill being run up “behind the scenes”
3. You pay as soon as you receive the advice so you know the bill is taken care of.
4. We can give you advice about overall strategy, or something more specific, such as drafting a settlement letter, or completing a divorce form correctly.
5. You are running the case, so the timing is in your hands. You progress things as fast or as slow as you want.
6. If you want to change to our “full representation” service just let us know. We will be pleased to give you a new costs estimate and you should be able to keep the same Solicitor.
7. We will represent you at a Court hearing if you would like us to and if we are available

*We will always advise you as to the option we think is best for you.*

## Some fictional examples

- Bob is separated from his partner, Jane, of 10 years. They have two children and because the communication between them isn't great, Jane is being funny about Bob seeing the children. There have been arguments recently and the emails on both sides have started to get quite nasty. Bob made enquiries about mediation as a way of resolving the dispute but to his astonishment, he received papers from Court in the post yesterday after Jane issued a court application saying she wants a Residence Order. Bob is worried about seeking legal advice because of the cost.

**Bob's Solution:** He decided to start by asking us for an initial interview. It only cost £50 and after the interview (which took an hour and twenty minutes because there was so much to explain) he understood the way the Court would be likely to approach the case, what to expect at the court hearing and what forms he needed to fill in.

A few days later, after seeing another few firms and thinking about it, he decided to go onto our PAYG scheme. He received a terms and conditions letter setting out what he could expect to pay to reach the next stage. He was also pleased that we could represent him at the hearing, which as it was a local court, was £500. With the help of his representation he and Jane managed to come to a sensible agreement at court and his case has finished.

- Cathy and Geoff have been married for 25 years but things have always been rocky. Cathy left the family home in January and has been put off by the hassle and expense of divorce as she has a job which requires her to work long hours and travel abroad a lot.

**Cathy's solution:** She decided to book an initial interview with us so that she could get a feel for the firm and decided if we were right for her. On the day of the interview she came with divorce paperwork that had been sent to her by her husband's lawyers. It was quite inflammatory and upsetting for her to read the contents and it clearly needed to be dealt with.

At the meeting she was clear she wanted us to get on with things right away. She decided to take us up on our fixed fee offer for the divorce but that she wanted to pay on the hourly rate, using full representation for anything to do with financial matters, as she was abroad too often to deal with things herself.

Cathy received a terms and conditions letter setting out the different services she wished to buy. She was asked to put £1000 on account, partly for the fixed fee but also so that other work involving finances could be progressed. When it came to her bill, the two separate ways of paying would be clearly laid out so she understood where her money was being used.

- Derek came to us half way through a messy family breakdown. At the initial interview he said he was unhappy with the way his previous lawyers dealt with things as the bills kept coming but he didn't understand what he was paying for.

His divorce procedure was nearly finished so he asked us if he could go onto the fixed fee for the divorce and if we could handle the rest for him.

**Derek's solution:** we said we felt he would be best off on full representation for the divorce, as we could sort out the matter in about 15 minutes of our time which was much less than using our fixed fee. We then explained to Derek about the PAYG system for his financial case and although he was dubious at first, he decided to give it a go in order to save costs.

Several months later Derek's case has progressed really well, and although he comes in about once every fortnight for an hour, he says he manages the costs much better as he has control of when he comes for advice. He thinks he has saved about 60% of the fees he would have spent if we were doing everything on a full representation basis and things are definitely moving in the right direction.

*If you or anyone you know anyone is worried about the cost of family legal advice, why not telephone us on 01844 354 555 to make your no obligation initial appointment?*

**REGLER & COMPANY**

**— SOLICITORS —**

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