

2013 BROUGHT CHANGES TO PUBLIC FUNDING FOR FAMILY CASES.

You may already be aware that in 2013 there were fundamental changes to the system of Family Legal Aid. If you are concerned as to how this may affect you then read on.

In April 2013 the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 came into force. Although the title of the act doesn't suggest it, the effect to this Act of Parliament is to dramatically lower the number of people who will be eligible to receive Family legal advice under the pre 2013 scheme.

The effect of the new Act was to limit Family Legal aid to those cases involving Public Law, Domestic Violence or Mediation.

The introduction of this Act had striking consequences for many families. Understandably, you may be concerned as to how you are going to be able to afford legal advice without the assistance of Legal Aid in the future. The purpose of this article is to look at the other options available to you.

Mediation is still available to separating couples to try to reach an agreement without resorting to court proceedings. At Haywards, **John Simpson** is a qualified Mediator who can assist couples in trying to reach an agreement whether they are issues relating to your children, finances or property. To find out more information about Mediation please make an appointment to meet with John Simpson by telephoning **01449 613631**.

Legal aid remains available for Mediation, subject to meeting financial eligibility requirements. Legal aid will also be available to assist and support clients who are attending Mediation.

Another possibility for separating couples is to try to agree matters on a Round Table basis. Family issues do not always have to be decided in a court room. From my many years of experience as a Family Solicitor those cases that have had a more satisfactory conclusion for the parties involved is where they have worked together to reach an agreement rather than this being imposed on them by a Court Order. If both parties instruct Solicitors with a view to working together to reach an agreement on a Collaborative or Round Table basis it is often possible to agree matters within a much shorter frame of time than lengthy and often costly court proceedings. Both Sue Wardropper and John Simpson are qualified Collaborative Solicitors. If you wish to find out more information about Collaborative Law then please contact **Sue Wardropper** on **01449 613631**.

If none of the above options are suitable to your individual circumstances then the Family Team at Haywards will be happy to discuss with you fix fee arrangements and payment plans to meet your individual needs. Unless your case involves highly complex circumstances we should be able to provide you with a fix fee structure for each stage of your Court Proceedings.

Finally, if you do require legal advice and you believe you may qualify for Legal Aid please make an appointment to meet with one of our Family Team as soon as possible by telephoning 01449 613631 before this opportunity is lost to you.