



MannBenham
— ADVOCATES —



Family First

Being there for you and your family



**As with everything
that brings you comfort...
We are there when you need us**

Putting Family First at MannBenham

Family life is the foundation of our happiness, but it can also be the source of our greatest challenges. At MannBenham, we believe that Family Law is about more than just legal procedures; it is about protecting people, preserving relationships where possible, and providing a clear path forward when circumstances change.

Whether you are starting a new chapter through marriage, navigating the difficult end of a relationship, or seeking to protect the interests of your children, our team is here to support you with both legal expertise and genuine empathy.

Our 'Family First' Approach

We understand that a relationship breakdown is one of life's most stressful transitions. Our mission is to guide you through the legal process step-by-step, ensuring you never feel lost in 'legalese'.

Resolution-Led Values

We are committed to a non-adversarial, constructive approach to family disputes. We prioritise finding amicable solutions that protect the long-term well-being of the entire family.

Empathy & Strength

Our team, led by senior specialists focuses on listening first. We act in your best interests, dealing with matters pragmatically to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Evolution of the Modern Family

Today's families come in many forms. We recognise the unique challenges faced by blended families, cohabiting partners, and international households. Our advice is never 'one size fits all'. We tailor our strategies to fit your specific family dynamic, whether that involves complex international assets or local matters. By looking ahead and identifying potential issues before they arise, we help you build a more stable and secure future for those you love.



Our Comprehensive Services

Relationship Transitions

Expert guidance through divorce, civil partnership dissolution, and separation for unmarried couples.

Financial Security

Negotiating marital financial settlements, establishing child maintenance, and drafting pre- and post-nuptial agreements.

Children's Welfare

Resolving residence and contact arrangements, defining parental responsibilities, and managing sensitive 'leave to remove' cases.

Personal Identity

Assisting with the straightforward but essential process of Change of Name Deeds for both adults and children.

What to Expect

Our Promise to You

We provide a safe, confidential space to discuss your future. From our first meeting, we prioritise clarity, compassion, and a roadmap tailored to your unique circumstances.

A Personalised Roadmap

No two families are the same. We take the time to understand your specific dynamics, whether you are a cohabiting couple, a blended family, or an international household. By listening to you, we ensure that our advice is tailored to your needs.

Divorce

Our highly experienced team are sensitive to your needs around divorce and finances matters.

We understand that 'divorce' can be a frightening word. However, it is our job to explain the common aspects of the divorce process, how that process will apply to you and what your options are in understandable terms.

Navigating the Journey: The Divorce Timeline

1

The Initial Consultation

We meet to discuss your circumstances, explain your rights, and provide a clear fee structure.

2

Filing the Application

The formal start of the legal process.

3

The Response

Your spouse acknowledges the application.

4

Financial & Child Arrangements

This happens in parallel. We negotiate on your behalf to reach a fair settlement.

5

The Provisional Order

A temporary court order indicating the court sees no reason why the divorce cannot proceed.

6

The Final Order

The legal end of the marriage.



Our Family Law Team knows that divorce often involves high emotions, especially when there are children involved. We pride ourselves on being sensitive to your needs during this difficult time, and our aim is to work with you to resolve your divorce with compassion, efficiency and in a manner tailored to your needs.

Using the information you provide we will then prepare the necessary documents. We will process the divorce for you from start to finish, and we'll keep you fully updated every step of the way.

It is our job to protect you and your future, and to ensure that the needs of your children are met during such a difficult time.

Child Maintenance

Child maintenance is payable to help support your childrens' day to day needs.

This includes, but is not limited to, housing, clothing, food, clubs and activities. It is not a payment directly for the benefit of the resident parent, it is to support your child.

The Isle of Man does not have a Government Body to assist in the determination of the level of child maintenance that should be paid by a non-resident parent. Here, on the Island, the matter is dealt with partly by the Department of Health and Social Care (if the receiving party is in receipt of certain benefits).



As a result of the above, we are often needed in most cases to help negotiate and establish the level of maintenance. We also draft consent orders where the matter is agreed or issue court proceedings where the matter is not agreed.

Our Family Law Team is experienced and deals frequently with maintenance matters. We are here to help you.

Parental Responsibility & Contact

Our experienced team has an in-depth knowledge of your legal rights as a parent; which is termed parental responsibility.

Not all parents have parental responsibility and it can be difficult to understand your legal rights if you don't live with your children. Similarly it can be hard, if you are a parent who has a child living with you, to understand what rights and responsibilities that you and the other parent may have.

Communication between parents can often be an issue and we aim to help you with this through our own communication with your ex-partner and through other mediums such as mediation.

We are here to take control of this process and work with you to achieve the best end result for you and your children. Court proceedings are a last resort but in some cases are necessary.



We can advise you about your parental responsibilities, whether you have it and what it means to you. We can also assist families who have never resided together but still require help to draw up a sensible care schedule.

When you are trying to decide where your youngsters will stay and when, there are a number of important issues to consider. We will help you think about what is most convenient for your children, their day-to-day routine and how that can be adapted smoothly to encompass the new situation. A key focus will be on how any agreement can adapt and grow with your children.

Contact & Residence

Our highly experienced team have a great understanding of contact and residence matters.

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Communication between parents can often be an issue. We aim to help you with this through our own communication with your ex-partner. We will also look to use other mediums such as mediation.

We will help you agree what's right for your children when you separate:

- Which parent the child/children should live with.
- When and how much time kids spend with the parent they don't live with.
- Changing a child's name or school, any religious or medical treatment issues.

We will help you set out a contact and residence order for:

- Where a child lives either with a parent or a non-parent.
- A child to spend time with or otherwise have contact with a person they don't live with. This is often the non-resident parent.

We are here to take control of this process and work with you to achieve the best end result for you and your children. In many cases court proceedings are a last resort but in some they are necessary.

Change of Names

Things change, and our highly experienced team are here to help you make those changes.

There are a variety of reasons why an adult or child may wish to change their first or last name.

We are all given a name at birth, however we still have the ability to change it. Some people do so due to a divorce or separation. Others may do so simply because they feel it doesn't sit with them any more.

A change of name can be dealt with by way of an agreement or through a court application. Although the process is pretty straightforward, mistakes can happen. As a result, we would always suggest you let us help you through the process. What could be more important than getting your name correct?



Our family team have a wealth of experience in this area and are ready to help. We can talk you through it with ease.

We can assist in drafting a Change of Name Deed. This is a legal document required in order to amend or update the name you were given at birth. However, there are other legal entities that have their own rules in relation to changing your name. Consequently, we will also provide the advice you need to make those changes when needed.

Leave to Remove

Relocating to a new country is a significant life event, but when children are involved, it requires careful legal navigation. Whether you are moving for career opportunities or to be closer to family, MannBenham provides the expert guidance needed to manage these sensitive transitions.



“Leave to Remove” is the legal consent required to move a child to another country. This is particularly relevant in the Isle of Man, where moves to the UK and further afield are frequent. When parents cannot reach an agreement, we assist in negotiating the practicalities of the move, including:

- **Contact:**
Establishing clear arrangements for the non-resident parent.
- **Logistics:**
Addressing travel funding and organisation.
- **Communication:**
Planning how the child will maintain their relationship with the parent staying in the Isle of Man.

If negotiations fail, a court application may be necessary. Our advocates are experts in drafting the essential documentation and representing your position. In any ‘Leave to Remove’ application, the welfare of the child is the Court’s primary focus. We work with you to build a comprehensive ‘Relocation Plan’ that details:

- Proposed housing and education.
- Strategies to preserve the bond with the parent remaining behind.

Our team has extensive experience in both applying for and defending against moves to the UK and international destinations like Australia and New Zealand. We ensure your voice is heard while prioritising the best interests of your child.

Protection for Couples

More couples in the Isle of Man are choosing to live together without marrying. While this reflects modern life, it can create a 'legal vacuum' if the relationship ends.



We provide specialist advice on:

Cohabitation Agreements

In the Isle of Man, there is no such thing as a 'common law' spouse. Without a formal Cohabitation Agreement, you may have limited rights to property or financial support if you separate. We can draft a 'Living Together Agreement' that clearly defines your intentions from the outset.

A 'Living Together' contract that outlines how rent, mortgages, and bills are paid, and how assets are split if you part ways.

Property Rights

Understanding 'Beneficial Interest', even if your name isn't on the deeds, you may have rights based on your contributions.

Financial Provision for Children

Ensuring your children are provided for, regardless of your marital status.

Prenuptial Agreements

We understand relationship needs and the importance of prenuptial agreements for peace of mind. Prenuptial agreements, are quite simply contracts that two people enter into before they get married.



These are documents which set out all assets and income that are held by both parties, whether jointly or individually. They also detail how they will be divided up in the event of a marriage break-down. Whilst initially a tool for high-net worth couples, in modern times all couples should potentially consider making one prior to getting married.

We will provide clear explanations so you completely understand the process.

We'll ask you to provide all the information we need and prepare the agreement and advise you on how to complete it and get it witnessed. You and your partner will then receive an original copy.

If this is something you wish to consider our Family Team will be happy to help you.

Post-Nuptial Agreement

Not all protection needs to be settled before the wedding. If your financial circumstances change during a marriage, such as receiving an inheritance or starting a business, a Post-Nuptial Agreement can provide the same peace of mind as a Prenuptial one.

Mediation & ADR

When a relationship ends, the thought of a courtroom can be overwhelming. As part of our commitment to a non-adversarial approach, we advocate for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods designed to resolve conflict without the need for a Judge.



Mediation

A voluntary and confidential process where an independent mediator helps you and your ex-partner reach your own agreements regarding finances or children. It is often faster, less stressful, and more cost-effective than litigation.

Collaborative Law

You and your partner, along with your respective advocates, commit to resolving issues through face-to-face meetings rather than through the Courts.

A Stepping Stone

The Isle of Man Courts strongly encourage mediation before any formal application is made. We can guide you through the process, ensuring your voice is heard and your interests are protected throughout.

Choosing mediation puts the power back into your hands, allowing for more flexible and creative solutions than a court order might provide. Our team is dedicated to helping you find the most amicable route forward, preserving relationships and reducing the emotional impact on all parties involved.

Wills & Estate Planning

A change in your family status, whether through marriage, separation, or divorce, should always trigger a review of your Will and Estate Planning. In the Isle of Man, a divorce or civil partnership dissolution can significantly impact how your Will is interpreted.



Your Will is the only place where you can legally nominate a guardian for your minor children, should the worst happen. We work with you to ensure your assets are structured to protect your family's long-term interests, including the use of trusts for children from previous relationships.

Updating your documents ensures your estate passes to your intended beneficiaries rather than being dictated by default legal rules. Our family team works alongside our probate experts to ensure your assets are structured to protect your family's long-term interests.

Legal Aid

Legal aid is a scheme operated by the Isle of Man Government to provide financial assistance. This financial assistance goes towards the cost of legal advice, assistance, and representation for individuals who cannot afford to pay for these services themselves. The system is designed to ensure access to justice for residents of the Island, regardless of their financial circumstances, in certain categories of legal matters.

Seeking Legal Assistance

If you believe you need legal assistance but cannot afford the costs, the first step is to contact the official body administering the scheme or an advocate who deals with legal aid cases. They will be able to guide you through the initial application process and determine whether your case and financial situation make you eligible for assistance.

The Legal Aid Scheme

Legal Aid in the Isle of Man is administered by the government and is categorised under Benefits and Financial Support services.

Important Notice

This information is for guidance only. For definitive and current information regarding eligibility criteria, application procedures, and the specific types of cases covered, you should always consult the official Isle of Man Government website or contact the Legal Aid Office directly.



Eligibility and Assessment

The scheme operates based on a strict means test and a merits test. To be eligible for assistance, an applicant's disposable income and disposable capital must fall below specific financial limits set out in the Legal Aid legislation.

Even if an applicant is financially eligible, the merits test must also be satisfied. This test considers:

- Whether the case has a reasonable chance of success.
- Whether the benefit the applicant is likely to gain is proportionate to the likely cost of the legal aid.
- Whether a reasonable, privately paying person would pursue the case.

Areas of the Law

If an application for legal aid is successful, the recipient is provided with a certificate allowing them to instruct an independent advocate to represent them. Legal aid is commonly granted for proceedings within the following areas of Manx law:

- **Family Law**
This includes matters such as divorce, financial settlements following separation, and disputes concerning arrangements for children.

And for future reference:

- **Civil Disputes**
Assistance can be available for various civil issues, though often with greater scrutiny under the merits test.
- **Criminal Cases**
Legal aid is routinely available for individuals facing serious criminal charges.

Your Advocates



Emma Ratcliffe
Senior Advocate

Emma is originally from the north west of England, having completed her Law Degree at Lancaster University in 1999 and thereafter having qualified as a Barrister at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2000. Emma worked at a leading family law firm in the north west area for several years before moving to the Island at the start of 2003.

Since arriving here 23 years ago, Emma qualified as a Manx Advocate in 2005. She has worked for several leading law firms on the Island since that time and was, at one time, a partner in her own firm. Emma has always focused on family work and thus has built a wealth of experience as a specialist family lawyer over her now lengthy time on the Isle of Man.

Emma is a Senior Advocate who has appeared before the Manx Courts on a regular basis for 23 years. She continues to specialise in divorce and the financial settlements which ensue therefrom, ranging from high net worth cases to those cases which require a more simple settlement of a modest family home. For decades her workload has covered all aspects of the family law sphere to include contact and residence issues, parental responsibility, leave to leave the jurisdiction, maintenance and divorce.



Jade Bradley
Advocate

Jade Bradley joined MannBenham Advocates in 2023, following a year of gaining valuable experience within the legal industry. In the same year Jade commenced her training contract, gaining practical experience across many areas of legal practice while working closely with clients and colleagues.

Jade completed a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) with Honours at Edge Hill University between 2019 and 2022, graduating with a 2:1 classification. Building on this academic foundation, Jade successfully completed the Manx Bar in 2025 and was commissioned as an Advocate in November 2025

Since January 2025, Jade has been instrumental within the firm's Family Law Department, speaking with clients on a range of family law matters including divorce and separation, children matters and financial arrangements following relationship breakdowns. Jade also undertakes legal aid work, supporting access to legal counsel for clients during often challenging and sensitive circumstances.

Jade is committed to furthering her professional development and stays up to date with family law developments, ensuring clients receive informed and effective representation.



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