

Civil Partnership

What is a civil partnership?

Same-sex couples in the United Kingdom can have their relationships legally recognised via a civil partnership. Any same-sex couple that registers a civil partnership now has the same legal rights as a married couple in areas including tax, social security, inheritance and workplace benefits.

From 10 December 2014, couples who registered their civil partnership in England and Wales can convert their civil partnership into a marriage.

The legal status of a same-sex married couple is almost identical, but there are some small differences. For example, while adultery can be cited as grounds for a divorce to end a marriage, it is not something that can be relied on to end a civil partnership.

Registering a civil partnership

To register a civil partnership, you and your partner must be aged 16 years old or over (with consent if under 18 years old); not already married or in a civil partnership; and not closely related.

A civil partnership is registered in the same way as a marriage is. Registration can take place in register offices and other venues such as hotels, but can't take place in a religious venue unless permission has been given by the organisation and the premises approved by the local authority.

You don't need to exchange vows for a civil partnership, but you can do so if you wish. Civil ceremonies can include readings, songs or music, but must not include anything that's religious, eg hymns or readings from the Bible.

Visit [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for further details.

Financial implications

Registering a civil partnership will have many implications for a couple's finances.

Employment

Employees in civil partnerships are treated the same as married employees. The civil partner is entitled to any benefit package that is available to a spouse, for example private health insurance.

Taxation

Civil partners are treated the same as married couples for tax purposes, for example a bereaved civil partner is able to inherit their deceased partner's property without being liable for inheritance tax. For further information contact [HM Revenue & Customs](#).

Your benefits

The addition of your new partner's income will affect your [means-tested benefits](#) whether they are your civil partner or co-habiting partner. You will need to inform your benefits office as soon as possible to let them know of the changes in your circumstances.

Your State Pension

If you remarry or register for a Civil Partnership after you have reached state pension age, you can use your ex-partner's National Insurance record for your basic [state pension](#). This will allow you to receive a higher rate of pension.

Widows, widowers and surviving civil partners who have reached state pension age can also inherit some or all of their late partner's [additional pension](#) or graduated retirement benefit.

If you have your own private pension scheme and remarry or form a civil partnership, you may like to change the nominated beneficiary for your pension.

Your will

If you remarry or form a new civil partnership, any existing wills that you have will be invalid. However, going through a divorce or dissolving a civil partnership does not. If you wish you can amend your will to stop any cancellation due to your remarriage, but you may prefer to make a new will.

See our article on [Getting advice about your finances](#) for more information.

Family matters

Civil partners are able to apply for parental responsibility for their partner's child or children, although this must be with the agreement of both biological parents. Same-sex couples are also able to apply to adopt a child jointly, even if they have not registered a civil partnership. For further information, contact your local [Citizens Advice](#).

Ending a civil partnership

A civil partnership can be dissolved one year or more after it is formed, on the grounds of:

- Unreasonable behaviour
- Two years separation (with consent)
- Five years separation (without consent)
- Desertion by one partner for two years

It follows the same process as **divorce** and should be done through a solicitor. The courts will have the power to make provision for the division of property, maintenance payments, residence and contact with children.

Useful Organisations

Stonewall – is the national organisation that campaigns for social justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. Stonewall has a freephone helpline respond to questions callers have around gay, lesbian and bisexual issues.

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Useful Organisations

Citizens Advice Newcastle (CAN)

Email: citycab@newcastlecab.org.uk

Website: <http://citizensadvice-newcastle.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0191 229 2750

Address: 4th Floor, City Library, NE1 8AX

HM Revenue and Customs

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-hmrc>

Telephone: 0300 200 7950

Stonewall

Email: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/contact-stonewalls-information-service>

Website: www.stonewall.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7593 1850

Address: 192 St John Street, EC1V 4JY

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