

# It's all change for divorce in England and Wales but is anybody ready?

Submitted by: Online Legal Services Limited

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From tomorrow (April 6th) a new set of divorce rules will come into effect in all county courts in England and Wales and with the new rules come new forms and new terminology as the court service attempts to bring the procedure of a divorce into the 21st Century.

The rules introduce changes in terminology as well as procedure. Decrees of divorce will henceforth be known as matrimonial orders, and financial orders will replace ancillary relief proceedings. They place a greater emphasis on mediation, and aim to simplify the way the courts are run.

However it seems that the court service has not given anyone anywhere near enough time to prepare.

From 6th April anyone filing for a divorce will have to use the new forms that have been created or they will be rejected.

There has been very little advance publicity about these changes by the court service and there is no way that people who are dealing with a divorce without a lawyer will have any idea that this is about to be implemented.

Lawyers too have been complaining about the lack of time they have been given to prepare with many lawyers asking on legal forums if anybody has seen copies of the new forms.

Mark Keenan of divorce service Divorce-Online (<http://www.divorce-online.co.uk>) says "The new forms were only signed off by the court service a week ago and many divorce providers will simply not have been able to get hold of the forms or update their systems. A glance at the court service website on April 5th showed that their website was still allowing people to download the old forms despite the new rules coming into effect on 6th April. Even staff at local county courts have no idea what is going on from the conversations we have had with them."

"Luckily Divorce-Online received a tip off a month ago and have updated all our systems to ensure that new documents were being provided to our clients from 31st March and all our clients who had not filed their divorce documents were e-mailed a month ago to tell them they need to get them in to the court before 6th April."

"We also know from doing secret shopper calls that most of our online competitors have no idea what is happening on 6th April and people need to be aware that hidden in their small print are substantial amendment fees which they may charge if the forms they have provided are rejected. We would therefore advise anyone thinking of using an online divorce service to check that they have updated their systems before proceeding."

The new forms will not affect people who have already begun divorce proceedings as transitional arrangements will apply to existing cases.

Note for editors:

Divorce-Online.Co.UK is the UK's largest provider of uncontested divorce cases having processed over 66,000 divorce cases since launching in 2000. Divorce-Online charges just £69.00 to prepare a divorce case and offers a substantial saving when compared to a high street solicitor.

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