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 **Celebrate Valentine’s Day with Romance and Practicality Says Pictons**

As the most romantic day of the year approaches, many couples are not only looking forward to a grand night out but also planning to take their relationships forward, whether that’s moving in together or even making the ultimate romantic gesture – a wedding proposal with a bright and shiny engagement ring.

Nobody would want to be seen as a killjoy amongst all the excitement and neither would award winning lawyers Pictons. However, while the Pictons legal teams celebrate along with the rest of the population, they are also keen to point out just a couple of simple easy moves which can save couples enormous sums of money - and their sanity - should a relationship break down in the future.

We all know those grim figures of one in three marriages ending in divorce and co-habitation splits are the same, even where children are involved. Siobhan Rooney, a Partner at Pictons and the Head of Family Law says “We wholeheartedly say ‘Happy Valentine’s Day’ but I think it’s important to remember that being romantic doesn’t mean you can’t be practical too.

“We see so many clients who wish they’d have taken steps early on to protect themselves from financial disasters. If someone inherits some money from a late relative, or if the bank of mum and dad help you out it can be a huge bonus to be able to afford a deposit on your first home together. However, it is vital to ensure that if the inheritance or parental gift is yours, or even if you’ve been a sensible saver and have enough money in the bank you should protect yourself in case of a split between you and your partner.

“This can easily be done with a pre-nup or cohabitation agreement and while this may not appeal during your romantic bliss phase, believe me you’ll deeply regret it should anything go wrong along the way. It’s been reported that superstar Cheryl Fernandez Versini did not have a pre-nup when she married Jean Bernard after just four months. If this is true she is now facing the prospect of losing half of her hard earned cash, which will run into millions.

“The best time to deal with your future financial security is when you are moving in together or getting married. I have witnessed so many brutal disagreements over the division of assets when a couple separate. Although we offer Mediation services, which usually lead to amicable solutions, sometimes the only way forward with warring partners is an expensive court battle.

“To be honest, if you bring assets into a relationship you are opening up the possibility of your partner having a claim on those assets. This can be avoided very easily by entering into a formal agreement but unfortunately people find it difficult to have conversations about what will happen on separation when deeply in love.”

If you would like to speak to Siobhan or one of her team about taking steps to protect your assets then contact us for a free initial chat on 01582 870870 to reach our Luton, Milton Keynes and Tring offices or email info@pictons.co.uk