



## **As Divorce Enquiries Soar By More Than 300% in January Pictons Says Make the Most of Family Mediation Week**

While it's well known that divorce enquiries rise dramatically after the Christmas and summer holidays, some interesting research has revealed that the reason is not, as expected, that it's because families have been in such close proximity over the holiday period. Instead, it was likely that the relationships were already in trouble and one or more of the partners decided to delay any split to spare the feelings of children, family and friends. No one gets any prizes for ruining a longed-for family Christmas or summer break.

Once the family occasion is over, however, many more couples head for the divorce courts. Siobhan Rooney, Head of the Family Law department at leading regional and award winning law firm Pictons says "As a Family Mediator as well as specialising in all family related law I am encouraged by the initiative of the Family Mediators Association to have a Family Mediation week from January 11-15<sup>th</sup>.

"Whatever the reason for a break up it's never an easy decision to make, although we always have a surge of enquiries about separation and divorce in the first few weeks of the New Year. When relationships break down an amicable solution can seem impossible, especially when you are feeling very emotional and don't know what to do or where to turn. If children are involved, concern for their welfare can drive you to breaking point. With Mediation we can give a much needed helping hand so that difficult conversations can start between both parties and prove productive rather than incendiary."

Family Mediation Week aims to raise awareness of mediation and how it can help separating families manage their issues collaboratively and productively. Siobhan and Drenne Dunphy, another family specialist in her team, will be available to have an initial discussion with people concerning their options completely free of charge.

Mediation involves both parties meeting with an independent mediator to talk through issues arising from their separation. This can include issues such as what is to happen with the family home? What should the arrangements be for the children? What financial support do each of you need? The purpose of mediation is not to assist client's rekindle their relationship, but instead to ensure that the process of separation is as amicable and productive as possible.

Siobhan continues "As qualified Mediators we are trained to give both parties impartial guidance to help them to understand their choices and to move forward more easily than they ever thought would be possible. Mediation provides a neutral and calm environment for discussions to take place. People are encouraged to consider all the options available to them and they will have the opportunity to consult with their solicitor throughout the process should they choose to do so."

Mediation has proven popular as it is not only a more cost-effective way to resolve disputes but also allows for disputes to be resolved quickly, allowing people to move on with their lives much sooner than if embroiled within court proceedings.

Siobhan concludes ““For couples who decide they want to split it is important that they do it as amicably as possible. When couples decide to part we always recommend minimising conflict as much as possible. We offer Mediation but if the couple decide to go to court it’s important that any proceedings are completed as quickly as possible. The recent case of celebrity couple Liam Gallagher and Nicole Appleton, who spent over £800,000 on legal fees, was even condemned by their divorce judge. They were fighting over total assets of just under £11 million, so their legal costs represented a massive waste of 8%!”

**If you need help with Mediation or Separation please contact Siobhan or Drenne and their team on 01582 870870 to reach our Luton, Milton Keynes & Tring Offices**