

# IS YOUR EMPLOYEE'S DIVORCE COSTING YOU MONEY?

Mary Shaw, solicitor at David Gray law firm, which advises organisations and their staff on separation process options and family law, addresses a common scenario that demonstrates how your staff's personal lives can impact your productivity



## Monday morning

You're walking through the office. One of your employees is at his desk but he's staring into space. You remember that he's in the middle of a divorce. Suddenly it strikes you: his divorce is costing you money. More worryingly, are there other employees in the same position?

## This could be expensive...

The divorce ratio in Britain is around five per 100 people. If you employ 250, that's 12 people. For cohabiting couples, the separation rate is three times higher. It could mean that more than ten per cent of your people are in some kind of family difficulty.

## Work is safer than home

'Presenteeism' is the multi-syllable, rather clumsy word to describe the phenomenon of people turning up for work but being unproductive and a separating person may well rather be at work than at home.

When couples separate, self-esteem and self-confidence can plummet. As a consequence, both people in the relationship may feel insecure and anxious. Depression is common and physical and mental health can deteriorate. And if there are children, the potential anxiety may increase – massively.

It's no surprise that at work concentration, energy levels and relationships for separating people can suffer.

## What can a good employer do?

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) advises that an employer should be "sympathetic and proactive" and "offer outside support".

For a proactive employer, their staff should be able to call on that support instantly. It should be an essential element of their employment 'package' alongside policies on sickness or compassionate leave.

That support should also swiftly inform your employee that divorce and separation does not have to end up in court – one of the most draining and stressful experiences a person can go through.

There are now real options which keep couples out of court and allow them to:

- get advice about post-separation parenting to help their children make a good transition to being parented by separated parents
- take financial advice about their options
- receive constructive legal advice about the issues that are worrying them such as future child care arrangements, housing, financial arrangements (capital/debts, income/maintenance and pensions) and putting this into effect legally – divorce, civil partnership, separation agreement

## The objective

For your employee, the goal is to resolve the emotional and practical issues which come with separation. For you, as a good, supportive employer, it is to restore that employee to their productive self. Surely that's a win-win situation.



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