

# Federation Matters

The magazine of Hertfordshire Police Federation

Winter 2020



**Federation and Force work together on officer morale** – see Page 6



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*Plus a whole lot more...*

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**[www.polfed.org/herts](http://www.polfed.org/herts)**

Check regularly to keep fully up to date.

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# 'I have total admiration for the way officers have risen to this challenge'

By Geoff Bardell, chair of Hertfordshire Police Federation

What an incredible year we have had since I wrote my Christmas message last year. No one ever thought we would have had to live and work in these unprecedented times.



Back in late February I was present at briefings and planning around the pandemic, and I don't mind admitting that at first I was terrified of what might have lay ahead for us, and our families.

I actually thought I might fall over at that point, and if it were not for the support and encouragement of our general secretary, Al Wollaston, at that time, I may well have. Thanks, Al.

I personally know how difficult it has been for many of you who were feeling similar at the time, and since. I trust the support the Federation team has given has been of great assistance and please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you feel we can help in any way or even if you just want to have a chat and share your concerns.

I have nothing but total admiration and

respect for the way you have all risen to the challenge; a challenge no other generation of police officers has faced in more than 100 years.

Many of you will have been touched by this horrible disease, not least those who knew and loved our retired colleague, Lesa Skeggs, who sadly succumbed to it very recently. I was Lesa's sergeant when she joined back in the late '90s at Watford, a nicer person you would be unlikely to meet and our thoughts are with her family, friends and former colleagues.

Hopefully, there is now a light at the end of the tunnel, with vaccines beginning to be rolled out.

I hope you find the magazine informative. It outlines some of the work we have been involved in this year, both locally and nationally.

I also hope you are all able to have at least some time with your families over the Christmas and New Year period.

Please look after yourselves, stay safe, and I might meet some of you on New Year's Eve when I am taking out the welfare van again this year with goodies on board.

All the best.

**“I trust the support the Federation team has given has been of great assistance and please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you feel we can help in any way or even if you just want to have a chat and share your concerns.”**

# Officers must be listened to and action taken

By **Al Wollaston**, secretary of Hertfordshire Police Federation

**T**his has been a really busy and unprecedented time with Covid-19. We have seen so much work come into us on all fronts, be that conduct, performance, fairness issues or general enquiries.



The latest national Federation pay and morale survey highlights what we have been saying to senior managers for some time. It is not scaremongering but it highlights the issues that are reported to us on a daily basis.

As a result, we have had a meeting with senior officers to discuss the issues and provide some advice on what can be done. It is of paramount importance that all officers are listened to and action is taken.

My thoughts are that we have become far too process driven as an organisation and we have forgotten how to deal with individuals. This needs to be looked at as a priority. It is something I am raising with senior officers on a daily basis.

Our welfare caravan continues to be popular and despite being closed due to Covid it was nearly fully booked for the time it was open. Bookings for next year will be looked at in the first few weeks of the New Year.

Our welfare van has been deployed on a number of occasions now and is available when we have extended scene guards, demonstrations or any other public order situation; keys are with Oscar 1.

As stated earlier, we are seeing an increase in conduct cases coming through PSD. We have had discussions in relation to the new

regulations and our concerns around how they are being interpreted. We need to ensure that all investigations are balanced, dealt with appropriately and at the correct level.

I know how busy everyone is out there and we are aware of the issues around CARMS and Athena which have been raised at the highest level. We will also be asking for the South East Allowance to be reviewed especially in light of the announcement of a public sector pay freeze.

Finally, I want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and hope you get to take some time away from work over the festive season. I appreciate things are going to feel very different this year.

Take care and stay safe out there. Feel free to pop into our offices for a tea or coffee. The kettle's always on.



*Federation chair Geoff Bardell (left) and secretary Al Wollaston out with the welfare van.*

# Herts morale lowest in the country, Federation survey reveals

Hertfordshire officers have recorded the lowest levels of personal morale in a national survey.

A total of 56 per cent of Hertfordshire respondents in the annual national Federation pay and morale survey said their morale was low or very low, the highest figure in the 43 police forces in England and Wales. The national average was 48 per cent.

In addition, 74 per cent of Hertfordshire officers who responded to the survey felt morale in the

Force was low or very low. Nationally, it was 75 per cent.

The reasons given for low morale included how the police are treated (92 per cent), pay and benefits, including pension (81 per cent), workload and responsibilities (72 per cent) and the police pension (70 per cent).

Some 16 per cent of officers said they intended to leave Hertfordshire Constabulary in the next two years or so, the highest figure in the country.

"It's been an incredibly tough year for everyone," said Geoff, "My colleagues have had to continue to deal with their own jobs while being on the frontline of policing the pandemic and coping with continually changing and evolving rules and guidance.

"They've had coronavirus weaponised against them in some cases, in others they've been criticised for the way they've policed situations, all while they have their own worries and concerns, not least taking this deadly virus home to loved ones.

"The virus is taking its toll on officers, and it is seriously concerning when morale in our Force is the lowest in the country. The fact that we have the highest number of officers in the country intending to leave is also a huge concern.

"And all this before we take into account the Government's plan to freeze public sector pay, including that of police officers, which will hit morale further.

"This report should act as a wake-up call."

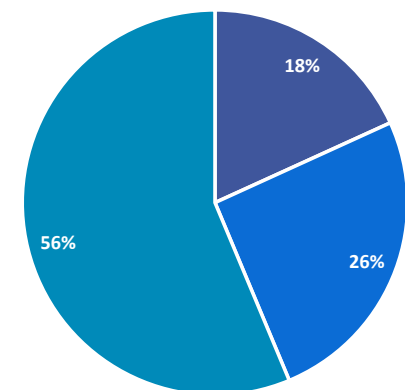
Geoff has also shared the survey's findings with the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Federation will be meeting with the Chief Constable soon to discuss the report further, particularly around Hertfordshire's comparisons with other forces.

In addition to the findings on morale, the survey revealed 91 per cent of Hertfordshire Police Federation members feel they're not paid fairly for the stresses of the job. The national average is 86

## The Covid-19 crisis

Overall, 56 per cent of respondents from Hertfordshire Constabulary said that the Force has managed officers well during the Covid-19 crisis. This is lower than the proportion of respondents in the country as a whole where 49 per cent said that the Force has managed officers well during the Covid-19 crisis.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Force has managed officers well during the Covid-19 crisis?**



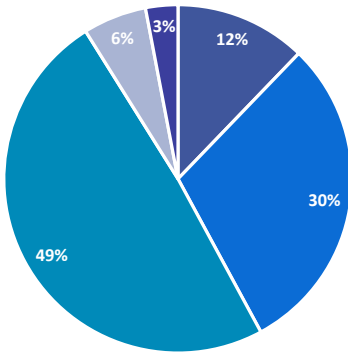
56%	Disagree
26%	Neither agree or disagree
18%	Agree



**Cost of living**

42 per cent of respondents from Hertfordshire Constabulary reported worrying about the state of their personal finances every day or almost every day. This is higher than the national figure for England and Wales as a whole, where 37 per cent of respondents reported that they worried about their personal finances every day or almost every day.

**How often do you find yourself worrying about the state of your personal finances?**



49% Every day  
 30% Almost every day  
 12% Occasionally  
 6% Almost never  
 3% Never

per cent.

The survey also found that 79 per cent of Hertfordshire Police Federation members don't feel fairly paid for the hazards faced in their job, against a national figure of 77 per cent.

The Police Federation of England and Wales survey was carried out across all 43 forces in England and Wales giving more than 130,000 Federation members their first opportunity to provide detailed feedback on how policing the pandemic had affected their finances and wellbeing.

Other key findings in Hertfordshire were:

**Covid-19**

- 56 per cent of respondents said the Force managed officers well during the Covid-19 crisis; the national average was 49 per cent

**“The virus is taking its toll on officers, and it is seriously concerning when morale in our Force is the lowest in the country. The fact that we have the highest number of officers in the country intending to leave is also a huge concern.”**

- 83 per cent felt the Force kept them up to date on Covid-19 guidance; nationally it was 78 per cent
- Half of respondents felt they'd received adequate training on the crisis from the Force, against a national figure of 41 per cent
- 62 per cent reported having access to adequate PPE when necessary during the pandemic, which was 14 per cent higher than the national average.

**Recruitment drive**

- Around one third (32 per cent) felt the Force would be able to recruit the number of officers allocated to Hertfordshire as part of the Government's plans to boost officer numbers by 20,000 over a three-year programme.

**Pay and remuneration**

- 77 per cent said they were dissatisfied with their overall remuneration, including pay and allowances
- 42 per cent worried about the state of their finances daily or almost daily, higher than the national figure of 37 per cent
- Two thirds (67 per cent) felt they were worse off financially than they were five years ago, the second highest figure behind the Met
- 10 per cent reported never or almost never having enough money to cover their essentials.

*Continued overleaf*

### Attitudes towards the police

- Three out of five respondents (59 per cent) said they did not feel valued in the police and almost two-fifths (39 per cent) felt they weren't treated fairly
- 64 per cent said they wouldn't recommend joining the police to others, the fourth highest figure in the country.

The survey was compiled by the national Federation's research and policy department, which plays a vital part in providing strategically important evidence to achieve better pay and conditions for members.

It generated more than 25,000 responses which is around 20 per cent of all Federated rank officers across England and Wales.

National Federation chair John Apter said: "These results should give serious concern to chief constables and to Government. The low morale reported by officers comes as no surprise, but the police service needs to take its head out of the sand and acknowledge we have a serious issue.

"My colleagues take the time to fill in these surveys and give their honest views, so it would be a

failing by police leaders to ignore what is being said.

"This year, more than ever, officers have been put under significant pressure, dealing with the day job as well as policing the constantly changing Covid rules.

"Despite doing their very best, they have been turned into the villains of this pandemic by some, damned whatever they do; and this constant criticism takes its toll.

"While it might come as a surprise to some, police officers are human beings; they have their own worries about the virus and the fear that they take it home to their families.

"I accept that the wellbeing of police officers is considered more now than it has ever been in the past, there is some good work going on in some forces, but the benefits of this good work are still not being felt by all of our members and that is a serious issue.

"This must be seen for what it is, a cry for help from police officers who need to ensure their voice is heard. If these results are ignored by police leaders, then this will be a failing that will be unforgiveable."

### Reasons for low morale

The survey asked respondents about the factors that had a positive or negative impact on their morale, the table below shows the proportion of respondents in Hertfordshire Constabulary who said a particular factor has had a negative impact upon their morale compared to the national figures.

	Negative impact on morale (Hertfordshire Constabulary)	Negative impact on morale (England and Wales)
Pay and benefits (including pension)	81%	73%
Workload and responsibilities	72%	66%
Work-life balance	57%	59%
Health and wellbeing	59%	58%
How the police as a whole are treated	92%	90%
The Covid-19 crisis	69%	65%
Your pension	70%	69%
The 20,000 officer uplift	14%	12%



# Wellbeing survey

**M**embers were urged to take part in the Force's Your Voice Matters Engagement and Wellbeing Survey.

The Force acted on the findings of the last wellbeing survey, launching a number of new initiatives.

Geoff Bardell, chair of Hertfordshire Police Federation, explained: "This survey gives the opportunity to provide honest and anonymous feedback. It will make a real difference to people's everyday working lives and the way we operate going forward so I hope as many officers as possible took advantage of the chance to have their say.

"We are facing unprecedented challenges, both professionally and personally, due to the pandemic and this is on top of all the complexities of normal everyday police business so this is an incredibly important piece of work.

"What came out of the last survey was that the organisation needed to do more in relation to health and wellbeing. This means there is now more support for those in need of help and the Backup Buddy app was launched to provide 24/7 wellbeing advice. The '100 Little Things' initiative was renewed and we also now have Wellbeing Wednesday – a bi-monthly intranet update with information on help and support avenues."

The survey results, which will again be collated at Durham University to ensure anonymity, will be available to members in spring 2021.

The survey focussed on five areas: organisational tone, supervisory leadership, employee motivation and values, employee engagements and wellbeing.

Officers and staff were sent a link and it was available on the Force intranet until 8 December.

# Pay freeze is a 'bitter pill'

The confirmation of a public sector pay freeze is a bitter pill for officers to swallow, says the chair of Hertfordshire Police Federation.

And Geoff Bardell says it is even harder for officers to accept because of the challenges they have faced in policing the pandemic.

"While we had heard a few days earlier that the Chancellor may announce a pay freeze for most workers in the public sector, including police officers, the fact that this was then confirmed in the Spending Review was still a blow," says Geoff.

"We all appreciate the efforts of doctors and nurses during the pandemic and we accept that they have been excluded from the pay freeze. But I think the Government is wrong to impose a pay freeze on the other frontline workers who throughout the pandemic have put their health at risk while maintaining vital public services.

"Police officers suffered an 18 per cent cut to their wages in real terms during the austerity years

and their salaries already fail to reflect the very real dangers they face on a daily basis – particularly when you consider new recruits' pay – so this pay freeze is going to have a real impact on them."

John Apter, national chair of the Police Federation has called the pay freeze, a 'kick in the teeth for police officers'.

"This year my colleagues have been on the frontline in the battle against Covid-19, protecting the public and putting their own safety and the safety of their families at risk. Despite the warm words and the weekly applause for key workers, it seems to count for nothing," he said.

"We are realists; we know that the country is facing a difficult economic future. But rewarding those who have played a vital role in the fight against the virus with a pay freeze is nothing short of a disgrace."

The police minister has confirmed incremental pay rises and promotion for members would not be affected by the announcement.

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# River rescue PC in line for Police Bravery Award

A police officer who rescued a young and vulnerable missing woman who was found in a river clinging to a steep bank in the early hours of the morning has been nominated for a national Police Bravery Award.



*PC Josh Darton.*

PC Joshua (Josh) Darton had only been with Hertfordshire Constabulary for a year when the incident took place and, having pulled the woman from the water, he then carried her in a fireman's lift for around a mile across marsh land to ensure she could receive medical treatment since the area was only accessible on foot.

"Joshua acted in the finest traditions of policing," says Geoff Bardell, the chair of Hertfordshire Police Federation which put the officer forward for the award, "He may have only been young in service but he instinctively acted to save a complete stranger's life.

"Once he and a colleague had located the woman, he pulled her from the water and clambered back up the river bank, carrying what was in effect a dead weight, to ensure she was safe.

"The two officers administered first aid and, realising she was suffering from hypothermia, felt she was in such a critical condition that they needed to get her back to their police vehicle so Joshua picked her up and carried her all the way back to where they had parked their car.

"The whole incident took place in the early hours of the morning in complete darkness. They were battling gale force winds and it was only two degrees. To add to the difficulty of the rescue, they had to negotiate marsh and bog land dotted with water courses."

PC Andy Hendley, who responded to the incident with PC Darton, said afterwards: "It

was humbling to begin with to see someone so committed to saving life with this selfless act. For someone with such a young service in the police, it was truly impressive to see and I personally was really proud of what he had done.

"The female was hypothermic at the time of pulling her out of the water and, had we not got there as quickly as we did, she would have certainly died due to the cold and, without Josh carrying her back to our car, the outcome could have been very different. Absolutely exhausted, he was more concerned about the female than anything – but he saved her life."

The woman, who was considered medium risk, had been reported missing from home by her family and was said to frequent the River Lea, Meads and Marsh area to the north of Hertford, which is vast and features challenging terrain.

A call was then received from a man who lived on a boat on the river saying he had heard splashing and screaming with a woman pleading for help.

Using their local knowledge, the two PCs ran across the Meads towards the river and the Pumping House, covering about a mile. On reaching the river, they located the woman and Joshua went down the steep bank to rescue her.

They carried out first aid at the side of the river and Joshua removed his fleece to try to keep the woman warm. She had minor injuries from the fall, was wet through and shaking uncontrollably. She had been missing for three-and-a-half hours.

Arriving back at the police car, the officers were met by an ambulance crew and the fire service.

The annual Police Bravery Awards, sponsored by Police Mutual, honour some of the finest officers in England and Wales who have performed incredible acts of bravery, while on or off duty.

This year's ceremony, which was due to be held in London in July, was postponed due to the pandemic, but will be staged on Thursday 15 July 2021. A total of 94 brave officers from forces across England and Wales have been put forward for an award.

# New Recruits

## How ready are you?

Make sure you are prepared for some of the financial challenges that may be ahead throughout your career in the Police.

### Financial Challenges for New Recruits



#### Student Loans

Consider the amount that will be deducted from your salary if you have a student loan.



#### Travel and Living

You can be stationed anywhere within the county so think about potential travel and food expenses.



#### Taking a pay cut

You may have taken a pay cut to join the Force - don't turn to high interest credit cards or payday loans.



#### Existing Debt

If you are joining with existing debt you could save money via a debt consolidation loan.

### Financial Challenges During Career



#### Travel and Living

Once you complete your probation there is a high chance of being moved again - so be ready.



#### Relationships

High rate of divorce and separation - consider the potential impact to any joint household income.



#### Lifestyle and Family

Holidays, new cars, weddings or home improvements - think about starting to save for these now.

### Financial Challenges Career End



#### Life Span

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# 'Things won't change unless you make it happen'

Sergeant Dan Jones may be in his first few months as a Police Federation rep but he brings 18 years of policing experience to the role.

Dan, who became a rep during the summer, says he is enjoying the chance to be able to help and support colleagues.



*Sergeant Dan Jones.*

"After 18 years of being the cynical 'what does the Fed do for me?' I decided to join and share my views and experiences from across the Force to improve the conditions for those I work with," explained Dan, who is deputy Force incident manager.

"My current job role provides an insight across the organisation – working alongside front-line officers, detectives and specialist units. Using the feedback and observations from these teams, enables my input to the branch to be evidence based across the board. Being the newbie, I've yet to play much of an active role but I'm relishing the opportunity to support colleagues who need the help on offer."

Dan has not needed the support of the Federation so far in his career, but admitted that could change at any point.

"I've been one of those fortunate officers in 18 years of service to not need the expertise and support of the Federation," he said. Like many, I often thought, 'why shall I keep paying? What does it do for me?'. The answer is simple really; doing the job we do, at any point, day or night, we may need that support on the end of a phone. A friend in a hearing. A subsidised break to recuperate. A contribution to a team event. Someone to challenge on your behalf. That's what the Fed does. And will continue to do."

Dan had his initial rep training cancelled because of the pandemic, but he's already set out his priorities in his new role.

"Ensuring that officers are aware of their rights and entitlements, and the support on offer from the Federation," he said.

"Once my initial rep's course is complete, I'll look to support those officers who need it and promote the good work and support available from the Federation.

"The challenge is striking the balance between what is desirable and what is reality, and meeting the expectations of officers," he added.

What other challenges does he see for the Federation?

"Force HQ development raises questions as to where the Fed will be based medium term," he said. "Herts Fed has come on in leaps and bounds in the last few years, putting welfare at the forefront, the caravan for rent, the welfare support van to name a few. Hopefully, this can continue, and the Federation can truly be there to support officers."

Dan joined the Force in 2002 and lists a string of highlights to date including policing the G8 in Cardiff, the London Olympics in 2012 and football spotting for Watford Football Club. He has also twice been Herts Safer Neighbourhood Team Officer of the Year, was third in Jane's Police Review National Officer of the Year and has made some life-long friends along the way.

He can see challenges ahead for the Force and for policing more generally. "Policing is always under constant scrutiny and the challenges of the last year clearly demonstrate that," he said. "We find ourselves in a position where the environment we police is changing more than ever, and as an organisation, we have to respond to that, with those that work here being key to that delivery. Frontline cops are under such demand – from the public, from Government, from the organisation. We need to look out for one another, support one another and remember we're all part of the same team.

"Policing is, and always will be, a constant rollercoaster. We join knowing that we'll be today's headlines one day, and tomorrow's chip paper the next.

"We need to evolve but remain true to those principles established 150 years ago," Dan added.

So, what would he say to anyone thinking of becoming a Fed rep?

"Things won't change unless you make it happen," he said.



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# Why do more people get divorced in January?

**By Samantha Farndale, lawyer in family law at Slater and Gordon**



The start of a New Year is a time of reflection. It's common for resolutions to be made and people often look forward to the future, taking a closer look at their relationships and home life.

There's no denying that 2020 has been a particularly difficult year for many couples as a result of the global pandemic. With couples having to navigate two national lockdowns, as well as juggling home schooling, periods of self-isolation and caring for vulnerable family members, it's sadly no surprise that relationships will have come under additional pressure.

If you or your spouse work on the frontline, then the impact of the pandemic is likely to have affected all aspects of your working and personal life.

As family lawyers, we often see an increase in the number of divorce enquiries following the festive season. In fact, the first Monday of the New Year has often been referred to in the press as 'National Divorce Day'.

If there were already problems in a relationship, couples may find themselves putting on a brave face over the Christmas period for the benefit of their children or relatives. Christmas 2020 is likely to be even more difficult with the ever-changing Government guidance about mixing of households.

## Is my marriage really over?

If you're considering a divorce, this is the first thing that you must ask yourself. It's a personal decision that can only be made by you.

You may wish to consider whether there's any chance of reconciliation. You should think about seeking additional support from marriage counselling services, such as Relate, or discussing matters with your own support network.

## What are the grounds for divorce?

There's only one overall ground for divorce in England and Wales and that's the irretrievable breakdown of your marriage.

'No-fault divorce' has received Parliamentary approval but has not yet come into effect. This means that if you and your spouse have not been separated for a period of two years or more and wish to start divorce proceedings in January 2021, you'll have to rely on the fault based facts of either adultery or unreasonable behaviour.

You can start divorce proceedings at any time, as long as you've been married for a period of at least 12 months.

## Seeking advice

It's always advisable to seek legal advice from an expert family lawyer as early as possible. This does not mean that you have to issue divorce proceedings straight away. Instead, you'll be provided with comprehensive advice which will allow you to consider the options available to you.

Seeking early legal advice can often make it easier to discuss your separation with your spouse before formally starting the divorce process.

We're often asked about protecting an officer's police pension on divorce. The pension can often be the most significant, and sometimes the only, asset of a marriage. Your spouse's entitlement to your pension will depend on a number of factors, including the length of your marriage, whether any of the pension was acquired prior to your marriage and mostly importantly, the needs of the parties.

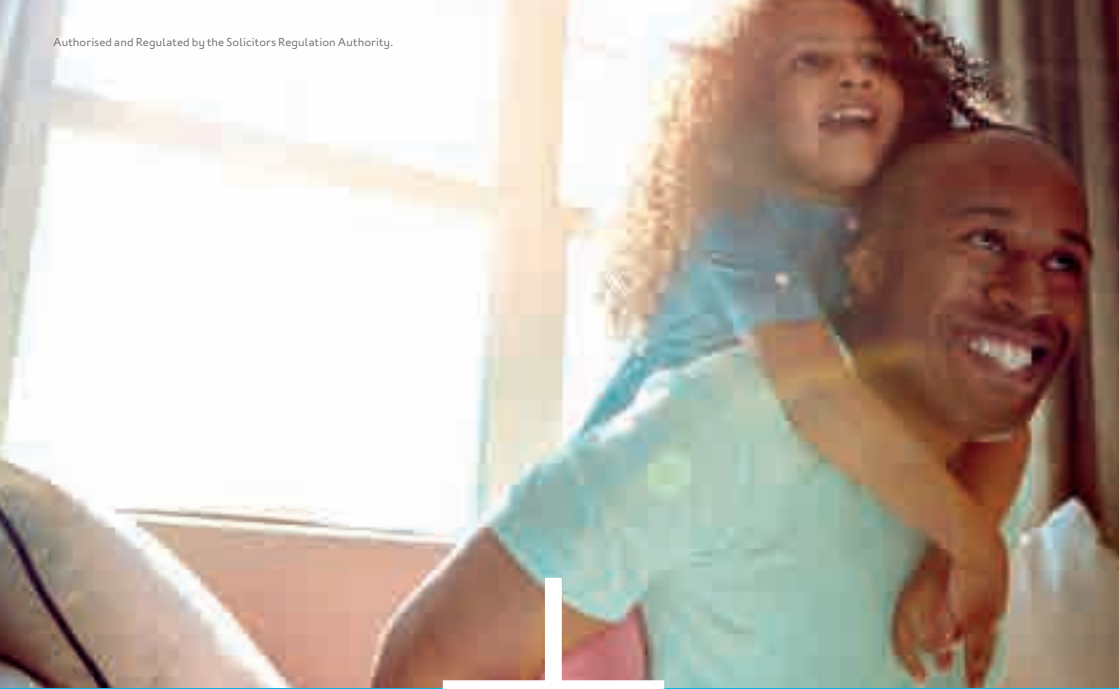
## Couples with children

If you have children and are considering divorce, you'll also need to think about future child care arrangements. Children of separated parents have been able to move freely between their parents' respective households, as an exception to the Government's 'stay at home' rules.

You should try to reach an agreement with your spouse about the most suitable and appropriate care arrangements following your separation. If you're unable to reach an agreement, you should consider mediation and seek legal advice. An application to court should be the last resort. The welfare of the children will be the court's paramount consideration.

If you need to speak to a specialist family lawyer, please contact Slater and Gordon Lawyers on **0808 175 7710** and we will be happy to help.





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