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## **Don't Let Romance Cloud Judgement When it Comes to Your Legal Rights**

With marriage rates falling to their lowest levels since records began in 1862\*, increasing numbers of unmarried couples are moving in together with no plans to tie the knot.

But domestic bliss could become a living nightmare if you don't consider the legal implications of cohabitation. Couples could risk more than a broken heart if they don't think of the practical consequences should love turn sour.

Vanderpump & Sykes Solicitors urges couples to seek expert legal advice before moving in together or combining finances. Having documentation in place to help assess the distribution of assets could save you a lot of time and money if you do break up.

Mark Heselton, partner in the Vanderpump & Sykes family department says:

"The falling marriage rate could result in more couples cohabiting and unless people take the necessary measures to protect themselves and their assets, they could end up seriously out of pocket or even homeless if the correct documentation is not in place.

"Understandably, people do not want to think about what could happen if they break up, or one person dies, but it is much better to face these difficult issues at the beginning rather than deal with the fall out and confusion at a later stage."

"It is prudent to get legal advice before moving in together."

For example, if buying a property, ensure both names are on the title deeds. If not and the relationship breaks down, unmarried partners not on the deeds may have few legal rights.

It is especially important to seek advice if your arrangement involves significant deposits or unequal contributions.

When renting a property, ensure both parties are named on the rental agreement, otherwise you could find yourself homeless if the relationship ends.

## **Children**

If you have a joint bank account, be aware if you can both pay in money, you can both take it out, so requiring two signatures for any big transactions is a sensible consideration.

If children are involved, fathers who are named on their child's birth certificate have automatic parental responsibility but this only applies to children born after December 2003.

If you have children with your partner and are not married, you and your partner will have legal responsibilities towards those children. Conversely if you are not married and have children born before that date, their father has no legal responsibility for them. Changing this is a simple matter if you both agree and a solicitor or the Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to assist you in compiling the necessary paperwork.

Finally, it is always important to make a will but vital if you have children or dependents or are not married to a partner. Without a will you may find that your loved ones do not inherit any assets you may have when you die.

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**For further information regarding this press release please contact Monica Myrie on: 020 8367 3999 or email: [monicamyrie@vanderpumps.co.uk](mailto:monicamyrie@vanderpumps.co.uk). This press release can be downloaded from [www.vanderpumpandsykes.co.uk](http://www.vanderpumpandsykes.co.uk).**

**For matters relating to cohabitation, contact Caroline Ford on: 020 8370 2870.**

**About Vanderpump & Sykes:** Established since 1899, Vanderpump & Sykes is a well respected North London partnership offering a wide range of legal services to business and private clients.

Vanderpump & Sykes serve clients nationwide whilst retaining strong links with the local community. The friendly and dynamic team are specialists in company and commercial work as well as in the traditional areas of litigation, conveyancing, family, wills and probate.