



# ***How To Choose The Right Family Law Solicitor In Ireland***



**SUMMIT LAW**  
*We'll get you there*



Nobody knows when they might need to enlist the services of a family law solicitor. More often than not, it's a time in people's lives when their family situation is unsettled and they are navigating through some major life changes.

Between the global pandemic and the current economic climate, the last few years in particular have been stressful for many people, which has impacted families nationwide. It's no surprise that the Annual Report published by the Courts Service showed that family law cases continued to rise in 2021, with increases noted in the areas of divorce applications, child access cases and childcare orders.

In this eBook, we aim to help you choose the right family law solicitor in Ireland.

## What is family law?

Until you find yourself in a situation where you need a family law solicitor, you may not know what exactly it covers.

Family law is an area of legal practice that deals with issues involving family relationships, such as marriage, divorce, child custody or adoption. It's an area of law that has seen a major development in more recent years here in Ireland, with new legislation coming into effect such as the newly revised Family Law Act 2019 which was amended in light of the Divorce Referendum in 2019.



## Why would someone need a family law solicitor?

The most common family law situation is a breakdown of a marriage or civil partnership and the disagreements that may arise out of that. This could include divorce proceedings, separation agreements, or if a marriage needs to be annulled.

Looking at the data in the Courts Service Annual report we mentioned earlier, there was an 11% increase in divorce applications here in Ireland for 2021.

Where there are children involved, child maintenance and custody arrangements need to be agreed upon, and this situation needs to be handled with extreme care due to the potential emotional and psychological trauma for those involved.

You may also need to enlist the services of a family lawyer for going through the adoption process or applying for guardianship for a child or children.

Domestic violence unfortunately can be another situation where a family law solicitor is required, particularly if you are in a regrettable position where you have to petition for a barring, protection or safety order.

All of these situations can be extremely difficult to navigate, and the outcomes of these cases can have a life-changing impact on those involved. Choosing a family solicitor who is experienced at handling these cases with sensitivity and patience is critical to a favourable result in your family law problems.

# What questions should you ask when choosing a family law solicitor?

## 1. Can the solicitor give you a clear indication of how your case will be handled?

As with all legal cases, the ideal situation is that the case can be handled through mediation, with all parties coming to a resolution before it reaches the court. The last stage of the legal process is going to court, which can be costly as well as stressful.

Choosing a solicitor who can talk you through the process and give you an action plan for how he/she proposes to handle the case. This will prepare you for the journey ahead, as well as reassure you that your chosen solicitor has the expertise to get you the result you and your family need.

## 2. Do they push for mediation?

When it comes to family law cases, one way to streamline the process and keep costs low is to enter mediation and seek agreements between the parties rather than go to court. A family law solicitor that continually pushes for mediation is typically one that has your best interests at heart, helping to keep you out of court and to keep your costs as low as possible.



### 3. Do they only cover family law?

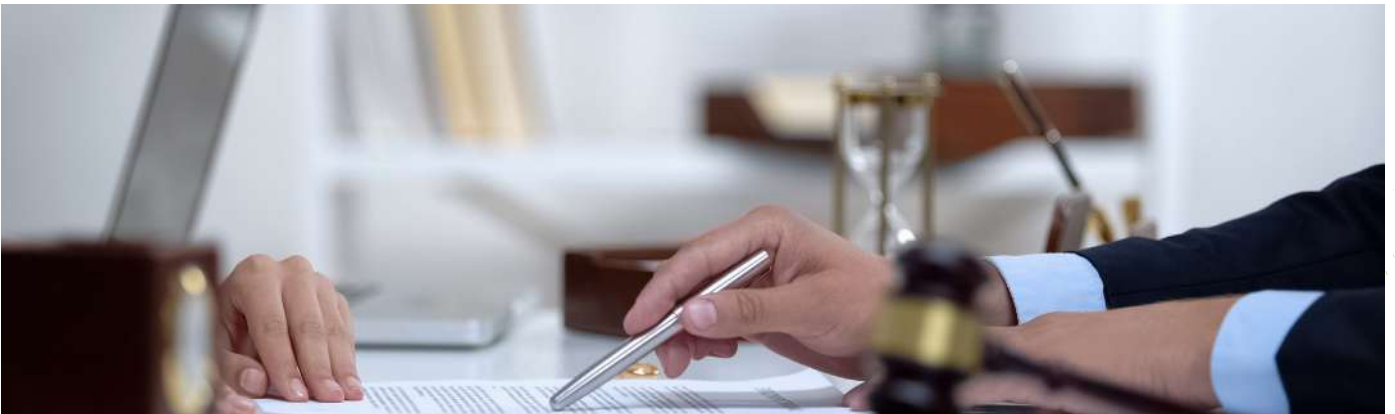
If you're considering a law firm that only provides family law services, you might think – "Oh great, a specialist!". However, it's important to err on the side of caution. Yes, they might specialise in the area, but is that because of just how profitable it can be when the cases go to court?

You want a legal team that's in your corner, not emptying your pockets.

Firms that provide a range of legal services have other revenue streams and are not entirely dependent on maximising their profits from family law cases. So make sure to take a very close look before deciding that a family-law-only firm is the one for you.

### 4. Can they give you a breakdown of the costs upfront?

When it comes to any legal proceedings, costs can quickly spiral out of control. You need to know upfront what your solicitor will charge you for their time, as well as keep you informed of the costs along the way.



### 5. What is the culture within the Firm?

Choosing a law firm that has a culture of core family values at heart is highly recommended. You can get a good idea of a firm's ethos by checking out its website.

Look out for testimonials, case studies, resources and guides that may demonstrate both how they work and what support they provide.

### 6. Do they have a good reputation within the legal profession and their locality?

It's an advantage to know if the law firm or solicitor you are considering is well respected within their profession. A good indication of this is whether they are involved on national committees and subcommittees such as the law society or family law associations. Another positive sign is whether they participate in local events or committees.



## 7. Are they a member of the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland?

The Law Society of Ireland is an independent professional body for solicitors, and solicitors must be a member of the Law Society to practice law. You are well within your rights to query whether the solicitor has a practising certificate from the Law Society before choosing them to represent you.

## 8. Who will carry out the work?

When deciding on a family law solicitor, you need to ensure that it will be your chosen solicitor that will handle your case from start to finish.

Although you understand that your solicitor may have a junior associate assisting them with your case, you need confirmation that the main point of contact will be the solicitor you have selected and that they will be representing you at every step of the process.

## 9. How long have they been practising law?

As we mentioned earlier, family law cases require sensitivity and intuition, and this can only come with experience.

Particularly for extremely complex cases, choosing a family law solicitor who has ample experience in handling challenging cases and is skilled at mediation is going to work in your favour. So finding out how long they have been practising family law is essential.

## 10. How much experience do they have as a family law solicitor?

Following on from the previous point, you need to make sure that the solicitor you are choosing is experienced in Family Law.



## Some aspects to consider before hiring a family law solicitor

The most valuable tip we can give you is to do your research.

Handling a family dispute can be a difficult journey to navigate and the outcome can have a profound effect on your loved ones. Choosing the right family law solicitor from a reputable firm is critical therefore it's certainly worth taking the time to research your options.

A discovery call with a selection of law firms available will help you to get a feeling for their approach and whether it aligns with your feelings about how your situation can be resolved. If they are offering you a consultation, then take the opportunity to discuss the best approach and be open to hearing their initial thoughts.

You need to ensure that you're choosing a firm or solicitor who will have your best interests at heart. While the goal is to resolve your case amicably and swiftly to save time and costs, if it's a complex case, you need reassurance from your solicitor that they have the experience to advise you on the right strategy.

# Summit Law – your family law solicitors

Here at Summit Law, we base our conduct on four central tenets – accessibility, reliability, efficiency and compassion.

Whatever your family situation, you can be sure that we have the expertise and understanding to resolve your case as amicably and timely as possible so that you and your family can move forward.

Our aim with most family law cases is to use mediation to its fullest and to try to eliminate time spent in court. This keeps the costs down, keeps the process running smoothly and generally speaking, presents more positive future outcomes for everyone involved.

If it has to go to court, we're in your corner, with the experience and expertise you need for a favourable outcome.

If you require impartial advice on matters relating to family law, we're here to help.

To speak to our expert team on matters relating to Conveyancing, Family Law, Wills/Estate Planning and Probate, get in touch today at [cillin@slaw.ie](mailto:cillin@slaw.ie) or call **01 526 6790**.







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