

International Divorce and Finance

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FAMILY LAW

**Advice for families with
international connections on
relationship breakdown.**



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If your relationship is at an end and you, your partner or your children have multiple nationalities, split your time living or working abroad, hold assets across multiple jurisdictions or are thinking of an international move, we can advise you on your next steps.

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SPECIALIST ADVICE TO SUIT YOUR SITUATION

Where there are considerations of an international nature, it is essential to take advice as soon as possible to consider relevant protective measures and the appropriate place and method to deal with any dispute.

The rules in relation to divorce vary considerably between countries. Where proceedings are started can have a significant impact on the outcome of your matter. It is therefore important to take advice as soon as possible to understand your options.

As international family law specialists, we can advise on a wide range of issues, including:

- Choosing the best or most appropriate place to get divorced, thinking about where it is possible to divorce, the outcome of any financial claim, potential issues with recognition and enforcement, as well as timings and other practical considerations
- Financial claims in respect of assets held overseas, including property, pensions, trusts, and business assets
- Financial claims following divorce overseas
- Claims against foreign pensions
- Financial support for children
- International freezing injunctions
- International prenuptial or postnuptial agreements
- Recognition of overseas marriages
- Enforcement of foreign orders

ACHIEVING THE BEST OUTCOME FOR YOU

There is a huge advantage for some spouses with international connections to have the divorce proceedings in the country which will give the most favourable financial outcome. Sometimes it is fundamental who issues first. This is why quick and urgent advice is needed from specialist lawyers. The key thing to consider in all international family law cases is that speed is of the essence.

Here are some of the relevant international considerations (applicable to either spouse, civil partner or parent) which must be considered when a relationship breaks down:

- Born abroad
- Raised abroad
- Foreign nationality or domicile
- Married civil partnership abroad
- Already divorced abroad
- Assets abroad including real property or pensions
- Working abroad, full-time or part-time
- Children being educated abroad
- Family court proceedings already happening abroad
- Child support obligations abroad
- Marital agreement entered into abroad

None of these mean the proceedings should necessarily take place abroad but the benefits of having the proceedings abroad or the necessity of recognising or enforcing any English order abroad must be considered at the outset.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Generally, England will legally recognise most marriages that have taken place abroad. Similarly, England is quite liberal in recognising foreign divorces, even those not issued through the courts, providing the marriage is recognised in the country where the marriage took place.

The same is not true the other way round as English marriages, and especially divorces, may not always be recognised abroad. It is therefore crucial to ensure that an English divorce will be recognised in the country where somebody is likely to live in the future.

**See also our separate guide:
International Family Law: Children**

FINANCIAL OUTCOMES ON DIVORCE

All that matters often is where the divorce occurs as the outcomes differ dramatically around the world. England is perceived as one of the most generous countries as the settlement is often driven by needs especially providing for accommodation and income. Other countries will only divide the assets accrued during the marriage and this may not provide for needs, adequate accommodation or income.

However, in some situations, if there has been a divorce abroad which results in an inadequate financial settlement, it may still be possible to bring proceedings in England, but permission is needed from the court. This is an exceptional power which should be considered.

In some countries there are still disadvantages for women and non-nationals which may be a reason for issuing urgently in England.

Any order made in respect of assets abroad must be recognised and enforced. There are several complicated international treaties which allow this which must always be considered before the final settlement is reached.

There are distinctive problems with enforcing financial orders against foreign pensions and advice should be taken where these exist.



OUR EXPERIENCE

Chambers and The Legal 500 are the two leading independent legal guides. They both rank our Family Law team as the best in the region. We'll apply our experience and insight to help you agree on what's best for you, and then make sure you achieve it.

“Stephens Scown has a clear understanding of the key issues in relation to the matter... All communication from Stephens Scown was efficient and prompt.”

Chambers and Partners (2025)

“The individuals really care about the work that they undertake and results from their clients. They put real time and effort into achieving the best outcome possible, while giving realistic advice when prospects are difficult. One gets the sense that they are really invested in the outcome of proceedings for clients and this shows up the quality of work done.”

Legal 500 (2025)

“They are exceptional. Stephens Scown has talent at all levels. The partners, trainees and newly qualified lawyers are all impressive. They provide a Rolls-Royce service.”

Chambers and Partners (2024)



Chambers
AND PARTNERS

MEET THE TEAM



Andrew Barton
Partner



Lizzie Smith
Partner



Ann Thomas
Consultant



CONTACT US

We have offices across the South West, in Exeter, Truro, and Taunton, as well as a serviced office in London, all offering facilities for face-to-face and virtual meetings when needed.

Get in touch with our experienced solicitors today.

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