

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

All of the firm's departments remain very much open for business. Our IT is operated in a secure VDI cloud environment, and so all of our staff are able to log on remotely and access all of the firm's IT resources and client files as if they were in the office.



Our office at 10 Royal Crescent is not fully shut, as our **Private Client Department** (Wills, Estates, probate and related matters) and our **Family** and **Litigation Departments** (ongoing court proceedings) are considered essential services by the Law Society. We are therefore operating a skeleton staff, physically in the office. Most of the staff are working remotely and we are using MS Teams, Zoom, Facetime and other methods of communication where appropriate.

Our **Litigation Department** continues to provide advice and support for clients faced with breaches of contract, disputes with business partners, and for landlord and tenant clients who are having to operate in severely constrained financial circumstances.

Our **Private Client Department** continues to prepare Wills and powers of attorney, and to advise on Estates and related matters. They are also ready to advise on disputes arising after someone has died.

Our **Employment Department** are advising and supporting clients with all aspects of employment law, including furloughing staff and making changes to the contract of employment.

Our **Commercial and Residential Property Departments** continue to support clients moving premises and progressing with transactions to completion. Our **Commercial Property Department** is also actively involved in various Landlord and Tenant matters as well as land deals, options and promotion agreements which are not time sensitive. We are also advising on facility agreements and security advice to fund certain matters. Transactions still need to happen and we are here and available with a fully serviced team of experienced professionals at all times to assist our clients to achieve their objectives.

Our **Corporate and Commercial Department** continues to support clients on corporate transactions and clients

reviewing and seeking to vary their contracts or considering their options in relation to any additional finance required to adapt to the ever changing commercial landscape.

Our **Family Department** continues to provide advice and support for all clients who require assistance. We are assisting clients who are in proceedings using technology and telephone hearings to enable cases to be progressed efficiently. We remain available on the phone and by email to deal with all enquiries relating to a relationship breakdown. We offer advice to clients who are married/ in a civil partnership and unmarried clients. We have the capacity to take on urgent cases involving children safeguarding issues, domestic abuse, protection of assets, injunctions and emergency procedures. We have connections to barristers chambers and experts who can also assist in these unprecedented times.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATES

We set out below the Coronavirus updates and advice which we have been publishing on our website:

All things Furlough: What your Business Needs to Know!

The Coronavirus Act 2020: Tenancy enforcement on hold?

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) - should I stick or twist?

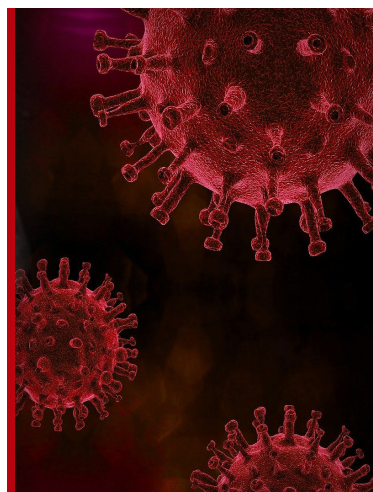
Advice for Separated Parents During Lockdown

How we Can Help you with Wills and Powers of Attorney

The Coronavirus Act 2020: Residential Tenancy Enforcement

Advice for moving to a new property during the lockdown to fight coronavirus (COVID-19)

Can I vary my spousal maintenance order as a result of COVID 19?



ALL THINGS FURLOUGH: WHAT YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO KNOW!

A few weeks ago, the Coronavirus was barely on people's radars and the term "furloughing" unheard of. Every day we are faced with developments to Government support for employers that are significantly impacting our businesses.



The government have announced some support packages to assist businesses through this period, including the Job Retention Scheme. Although, navigating this scheme alongside existing employment law, can feel a bit like playing minesweeper. This article is to bring you up to speed as developments stand at 6 April 2020.

JOB RETENTION SCHEME

The Chancellor announced the implementation of Job Retention Scheme on 20 March 2020. The first guidance was published on 26 March 2020 and was subsequently updated on 4 April 2020.

The scheme was back-dated to apply from 1 March 2020 and it is currently open for 3 months, although it could be extended "for longer if necessary". The purpose of the scheme is to preserve job security in a situation where the business would otherwise be looking at either laying-off or making individuals redundant.

Eligibility – Who is the Furloughed Worker?
The individual must have been on the payroll as at **28 February 2020**. The gap from this date and the announcement of the scheme, does mean there are new starters that are unfortunately not covered by the scheme. It also appears businesses who had a TUPE transfer on or after 28 February 2020 will also be excluded from the scheme. However, if you have dismissed an individual post 28 February 2020, the scheme does permit you re-hiring, if you so wish, and placing the individual on to furlough leave instead.

Furloughing applies to "workforce who remain on payroll but are temporarily not working during the coronavirus outbreak". The recent update has clarified that extends further than just employees and does apply to "workers" so long as they are on the payroll at 28 February 2020. It also extends to company directors who have an employed element, including sole directors employed via their own umbrella company.

The new guidance also makes the position clear that furloughing can be applied to individuals shielding and those with

childcare or caring obligations.

It does not apply to any workers who can continue to work either in the office or remotely, and there is sufficient work to do so. The scheme is designed to help businesses with a reduction in work and affected individuals follow the current medical advice, whilst avoiding being laid-off or made redundant. Where businesses can operate without physical interactions and employees are working remotely, the scheme does not apply.

CHANGING EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Unless there is a contractual term permitting the employer to change the individual's employment status, they will need to notify the affected individual and seek their consent to the variation. It is sensible to obtain their consent in writing.

PAY

The scheme enables employers to recover 80% of the furloughed workers' wages, to a maximum of £2,500 per calendar month. The 80% is paid gross of employee's tax, national insurance and pension contributions. The business can also recover employer's national insurance and pension contribution on top of the 80%. When calculating the 80%, it includes wages, usual commissions, past overtime and fees (these have not been defined but we are assuming they relate to professional membership fees). It does not include discretionary bonuses or commission, benefits in kind (car allowance, medical cover) or tips. For individuals who have variable earnings, these can either be averaged over 2019/2020 fiscal year or the same as the month in the previous year; i.e. payment in April 2020 would be based on payment in April 2019.

It is within the employer's discretion whether to top-up the remaining wages. However, employers need to be mindful that pay is one of the most fundamental contractual terms. Like the change in status, any variation of contract should be done with consultation and consent of the individual. One would hope when faced

with the alternative of potential termination, they would be willing to agree to this temporary change. Employers should proceed with great caution if seeking to unilaterally vary the contract of employment, or if seeking to dismiss and re-engage.

The scheme is a grant for reimbursement and, as such, the employer will need to make the wage payment to the worker through PAYE and then will need to apply for the repayment through the online portal. The portal is not currently live and there is no announced date for implementation, however HMRC anticipate it to go live around the end of April 2020.

The scheme therefore does not mitigate cashflow issues. If your business is struggling now and needs short term cashflow support, then you may be eligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. Alternatively, you will need to consult with your affected workforce and see if you can obtain their consent to defer payment until it has been recovered from HMRC.

SELECTION

It is for the employer to determine which individuals could be placed on furlough leave. Like redundancies it should reflect the diminished need for them to do the work they would usually do. Employers need to identify which of their workforce will be designated as "furloughed workers". When selecting individuals for furlough, employers would be advised to have a clear rationale for individuals being selected to safe-guard them from any subsequent challenges from employees around discrimination, detriment and potential constructive dismissal claims.

It is important to note that all individuals selected for furlough leave need to be informed in writing and this needs to be retained by the employer for 5 years. This is presumably for HMRC's anti-fraud measures.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3...

DURATION AND OBLIGATIONS ON FURLOUGH LEAVE

The minimum duration for furlough leave is 3 weeks. The guidance has been clarified to confirm that businesses can rotate furlough leave, as long as each separate period is a minimum of 3 weeks.

While on furlough leave the individual is not permitted to do any work for the business that is providing a service or revenue generating. They can however undertake training, providing they do not go below minimum wage for the period completing training.

The guidance has also made it clear that they are able to perform paid work for another employer or business during their furlough leave.

ANNUAL LEAVE AND PAY

The correlation between annual leave and furlough leave remains one of the areas lacking clarity. It is recognised amongst most employment law experts, in accordance with current legal position, that individuals on furlough leave can still be required by the employer to take annual leave. The employer must give at least double the amount of notice as the leave they wish for

them to take. For example, 10 days of annual leave will require 20 days' notice.

As a result of emergency legislation, employers are also now permitted to allow individuals to carry over up to 20 days of annual leave entitlement, across 2 years, where it has not been possible to take it because of the coronavirus situation. This may go some way in helping businesses manage annual leave entitlement during these times. However, it is recognised that allowing all the workforce to carry over this much leave would still cause operational difficulties for an employer, at a time when it is (hopefully) recovering from the situation. It is therefore important to note that it does not prevent the employer from depleting some of the annual leave whilst the individual is on furlough leave. In order to protect the implied term of mutual trust and confidence, it would be sensible to adopt a balance between the preferences of the individual and the needs of the business.

SICK PAY

Employers cannot furlough individuals on sick leave. Employers must pay the individual in accordance with their usual contractual entitlement for sick pay or

Statutory Sick Pay in the event there is no company sick pay, or it has been already exhausted. Statutory Sick Pay for coronavirus is payable from day 1.

REDUNDANCIES

Although it is hoped that above job retention scheme will limit the need to make redundancies, this nevertheless remains something that many businesses will still face. Any redundancies will need to fall within the current statutory provisions. There needs to be a genuine redundancy situation (a closure of business or diminished need for employees to do the work available) and a fair and reasonable procedure adopted. This would include a fair warning, a consultation process including selection process, and considering any possible options of suitable redeployment.

If you make redundancies, employees will be entitled to wages until termination date, accrued but untaken annual leave and notice pay. Employees with 2 years' service or more will be entitled to a redundancy payment.

Kimberley Whalen-Blake, Director

☎ 01242 586350

✉ kwb@hughes-paddison.co.uk



THE CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020: TENANCY ENFORCEMENT ON HOLD?

The Coronavirus Act 2020 came into force on 25 March 2020. It implements a series of measures to protect both landlords and tenants.

Summarised below are some of the key measures affecting business tenancies.

BUSINESS TENANTS PROTECTED FROM EVICTION

The Coronavirus Act prevents landlords from forfeiting a business tenancy for non payment of rent. This restriction is in place until 30 June 2020 although this period is likely to be extended.

The term "Rent" is defined widely by the Act and includes not only the principal rent but also insurance contributions, service charges, and any other payments due under the terms of the lease.

The restriction on forfeiture only applies in relation to non payment of rent. It does not prevent the landlord from taking enforcement action based upon other breaches of the lease (although how realistic it is for such enforcement action to be taken during a period of

lockdown is debateable).

The Act only protects tenants from forfeiture action. It does not create a rent free period nor does it remove other enforcement options from the landlord's armoury. A landlord is still entitled to:-

- withdraw monies from a tenant's rent deposit
- add interest to the rental debt in accordance with the interest provisions contained in the lease
- commence proceedings against the tenant (or a guarantor) for the rental debt
- serve a statutory demand and commence insolvency action
- initiate Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery

The question that many landlords will be asking is whether, notwithstanding default by the tenant, forfeiting a lease and recovering

possession of the premises is a prudent objective. Premises will be virtually impossible to re let and there will potentially be a liability for business rates.

There may be other options. It may be worth working with a tenant to navigate through the immediate crisis. You might be able to agree with a tenant that, in return for agreeing a rent reduction or rental holiday, the tenant will extend its contractual term or will remove a break clause. These are unprecedented times and a less conventional, more creative approach may well pay dividends in the long run.

Information on how the Act will affect residential landlords is available on page 6.

Andrew Turner, Director

☎ 01242 586841

✉ AET@hughes-paddison.co.uk

CORONAVIRUS BUSINESS INTERRUPTION LOAN SCHEME (CBILS) - SHOULD I STICK OR TWIST?

The Government has offered unprecedented levels of financial support to businesses and individuals.



Where that comes in the form of grants such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, business rate holidays and the Small Business Grants Scheme, businesses will be looking to take full advantage of the funds available. Where the Government is offering to defer payments such as VAT or offering incentives to take out CBILS, this is a welcome support in cash flow terms, but businesses will need to consider carefully the extent to which they will be able to repay those loans and meet those liabilities in the long term.

PERSONAL LIABILITY

The main ways in which a director may incur personal liability to a company's creditors are as a result of giving personal guarantees on borrowing or in respect of lease liabilities, or wrongful trading. Liability for wrongful trading occurs where a director allows a company to continue to trade when he knew or ought to have concluded that the company had no reasonable prospect of avoiding insolvent liquidation. In those circumstances, a director may be liable for the extent to which the creditors have been put in a worse position as a result of the continuation of the trade.

The Government has offered support on both of these fronts by:

1. temporarily suspending director's liability for wrongful trading; and
2. providing that the banks are not allowed to ask for personal guarantees in respect of a CBIL for a facility of below £250,000.

However, directors should be aware that when a company is trading while insolvent, the directors should no longer prioritise the interests of the shareholders and instead must act in the best interest of the company's creditors. As the Government has specifically sought to remove liability for wrongful

trading, it is not clear whether they will also protect directors from claims for breach of their duty to act in the interests of the creditors if they continue to trade while insolvent.

CORONAVIRUS BUSINESS INTERRUPTION LOAN SCHEME (CBILS)

The temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme supports SMEs with access to borrowings of up to £5 million for up to 6 years. The finance is offered through a list of 40 accredited lenders including the high street banks. You are therefore likely to first discuss this with your existing bank.

The Government is incentivising the banks to offer this finance by agreeing to guarantee up to 80% of the loan. The banks are not allowed to ask for personal guarantees for facilities under £250,000. Any personal guarantee given in respect of loans over £250,000 must be kept at 20% of the outstanding balance and are not allowed to be backed by security over the guarantor's personal private residence.

As a further incentive to the borrower, the Government will make a grant to cover the first 12 months of interest and any initial bank charges in relation to the finance. If you are accessing the CBIL through an existing lender, then you should review what existing personal guarantees you have given to that lender and the extent to which those guarantees may or may not apply to the CBILS.

SHOULD I STICK OR TWIST?

The Government may see it as in their interests and the economy's interests that businesses should borrow so that they can trade through the lockdown period and beyond, but directors need to ensure that they have considered the long-term prospects of the company and the ability of the company to trade through this

economic slowdown and pay off those liabilities and the debt extended during this crisis. Forecasting is particularly difficult when no one can be certain how long the lock down and subsequent restrictions will last and how quickly we will return to business as usual afterwards.

Business owners may want to consider the value of the business relative to the extent of the liabilities which are being increased as a result of continuing to trade. If it would be more expensive to start an equivalent new business from scratch or buy an equivalent business than to pay off the debts incurred, then borrowing to keep the business trading is likely to remain attractive, especially with the Government taking on the cost of the first year's interest and bank fees.

Directors should also have regard to the interests of the company's employees and so continuing to trade is most likely to be in the best interests of the employees.

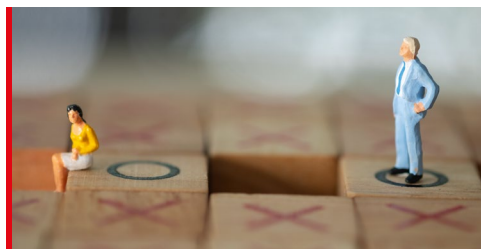
If it would be less expensive to start an equivalent new business from scratch or buy an equivalent business than to pay off the debts and liabilities incurred, then some owner managed businesses may take the view it is better to cease trading and/or put the company into administration or liquidation now before incurring additional debt and worsening the position of creditors.

Every business has its own unique set of circumstances and opportunities and we recommend that you review your financial position and forecast with your accountants to determine how best to proceed.

Jon Rathbone, Director

☎ 01242 586832

✉ jdr@hughes-paddison.co.uk



ADVICE FOR SEPARATED PARENTS DURING LOCKDOWN

We find ourselves in unprecedented times and the current public health crisis raises worries and concerns, not least from separated parents wondering how to manage the arrangements for their children at this time.

The Government have clarified that the stay at home rules do allow for children under the age of 18 to be moved between their parents' homes.

The guidance from the Courts and CAFCASS is clear – wherever possible, parents should stick to the agreed arrangements for their children, whether this is set out in a Court Order or informal arrangements between parents.

The law has not changed concerning Court Orders and where an Order is in force, it must be complied with. If there is non-compliance it may be possible for the other parent to apply to the Court to enforce the terms of the Order. It may be possible that the parent with the child will argue that they had a justified and reasonable excuse for not complying to the terms of the Order. It will be very much at the Court's discretion and each case considered on their particular set of circumstances.

The Court will however expect parties to communicate in these difficult times and discuss their worries and concerns and work together to find a practical solution in the best interests of the children.

Parents should of course follow the Government's advice for hand washing, social distancing, avoiding public transport where possible and minimising coming into contact with other people.

For children of school-age, parents should discuss how this is to work between their home, to avoid duplicating work and providing consistency for children between their homes.

Where households are having to self-isolate, parents should agree how contact with the other parent can be maintained – FaceTime, Skype and other video contact should be considered as well as other creative ways to spend time together, such as online games.

These are of course worrying times for everyone and children will necessarily pick up on their parents' tension and worries.

They will have their own worries about being separated from their wider family, friends and security of their school environment. This is an opportunity for separated parents to try to work together for the benefit of their children, putting the adult issues between them aside, to support their children and families for the short and longer term.

For the current guidance in respect of moving children between households and arrangements for separated families, please see information for parents on page 7.

Jennifer Allen, Director

☎ 01242 574244

✉ jal@hughes-paddison.co.uk

HOW WE CAN HELP YOU WITH WILLS AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY

There are many things to think and worry about at the moment, but something which may be causing you particular concern is whether your Will is up to date, or how you can put a Will in place if you do not already have one. It is definitely not too late, and we can help you tick this concern off your list.

WILLS

If you need to update your Will or make a new one, although we cannot see you face to face, there are many ways in which we can take your instructions. Our experienced team of solicitors can take instructions from you by post, over the phone or by video conference on one of the many platforms that are available.

Despite the restrictions on face to face meetings, we can help with the strict requirements for executing your Will. We can explain to you how to go about this under the current restrictions and can assist with practicalities depending on your circumstances.

Although your new Will will be perfectly valid if you follow our instructions, we can in due course, arrange a meeting to check and re-execute your Will after the lockdown has ended if you instruct us to do so.

Please get in touch to discuss and if you

are aware of an elderly friend or relative who may be worrying about their Will, please do encourage them to contact us by telephone and we can take matters from there.

POWERS OF ATTORNEY

You might be wondering about how you can deal with your financial affairs if you are stuck at home and find dealing with online banks or financial institutions difficult. Similarly you may be worrying about elderly friends or relatives in this situation and want to be able to help them.

If mental capacity is not in issue, anyone can create a Lasting Power of Attorney ('LPA'), whereby they appoint one or more trusted people to deal with their finances for them. These people can manage your affairs on your behalf even whilst you still have mental capacity. For example, they can deal with banks and financial institutions online or on the phone and, where circumstances allow, go into banks for you.

LPAs cannot be used until they are registered with the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG). The OPG has is still operating, although it has advised that delays may be experienced. Its website advises that it aims to turn around registration applications within its usual 40 working days.

If you feel that 8 weeks is too long to wait to

have someone to assist with your financial affairs you can consider in the interim putting in place another document called a General Power of Attorney.

This is a document that we can draw up for you which temporarily lets someone you choose manage your finances for you. As soon as it is signed and witnessed correctly, the attorney/s will be able to deal with your finances. Once the LPA is registered we can revoke the General Power of Attorney.

The reason you should apply for an LPA as well as drawing up a General Power is that the General Power will be automatically revoked if you were to lose mental capacity. The General Power of Attorney is therefore best used as a stop gap arrangement whilst you are waiting for the LPA to be registered.

Again, we can take instructions over the phone or by video conference, and can offer practical advice and assistance regarding the execution of these documents and forms. We are also able to act as the required 'Certificate Provider' for your LPA.

Caroline Farmer, Director

☎ 01242 586846

✉ cxhf@hughes-paddison.co.uk

THE CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020: RESIDENTIAL TENANCY ENFORCEMENT

The Coronavirus Act 2020 Act has suspended all evictions and repossession action until 30 June 2020.



The Act has also provided that notice periods for Section 21 and Section 8 Notices are extended to 3 months.

For landlords who have already issued a Section 21 or Section 8 Notice, those Notices will remain valid but the earliest date that the landlord will be able to push forwards with possession

proceedings will be 30 June 2020. All parties need to be aware that notwithstanding the suspension of enforcement action, rent will continue to accrue.

Landlords also need to be aware that they will remain responsible for complying with the repairing covenants

contained in their lease. Landlords will need to be particularly aware of the need for any urgent health and safety works.

Andrew Turner, Director

☎ 01242 586841

✉ AET@hughes-paddison.co.uk



ADVICE FOR MOVING TO A NEW PROPERTY DURING THE LOCKDOWN TO FIGHT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

In this unprecedented time, the government has clarified their advice on moving home during the lockdown.

The essence of this advice is where possible to delay moving, this applies to both homebuyers and renters.

TRANSACTIONS THAT HAVE ALREADY EXCHANGED CONTRACTS

If a property is vacant, or no physical 'move' will take place on completion for example, the purchase of a buy to let property where the tenant is remaining in occupation, then the transaction can proceed in the usual way.

If a property or properties in the chain are occupied, the government is asking all parties in the chain to delay the completion date where possible.

UK Finance is currently working with lenders to extend mortgage offers that are due to expire during 'lockdown' on

transactions that have exchanged for a further three months to enable completion to take place at a later date.

If it is not possible to rearrange the completion date due to contractual reasons, the Government has confirmed these 'critical home moves' can go ahead. All parties involved must follow Public Health England's guidance on social distancing. The Government has also confirmed 'critical home moves' will be exempt from the new emergency enforcement powers the police have been given.

TRANSACTIONS THAT HAVE NOT YET EXCHANGED

Parties are encouraged not to withdraw, and conveyancers are urged to continue to work on files to ensure the

transactions are ready to proceed once the lockdown has been lifted.

Hughes Paddison's Residential Conveyancing Department remains fully operational with the majority of the team working remotely from home. If you would like to discuss your transaction the residential team can be contacted via the main office number 01242 574 244 or by sending an email to the fee earner dealing with your case.

Heidi Aitken, Director

✉ ha@hughes-paddison.co.uk

Simon Hodges, Director

✉ srh@hughes-paddison.co.uk

☎ 01242 574 244

USEFUL LINKS:

For the current government guidance in respect of moving to a new house, please go to:

www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak

Public Health England's guidance:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection



CAN I VARY MY SPOUSAL MAINTENANCE ORDER AS A RESULT OF COVID 19?

Whether or not you are employed or self employed, if you are suffering from the impact of a salary decrease, you have been furloughed, made redundant or a contract ended, you will no doubt have concerns as to your obligations under the terms of a maintenance order.



When a spousal maintenance order was made it was likely to have been based upon projected income. It was expected that, save for an extraordinary event, that income would continue throughout the duration of the maintenance term.

We are now all experiencing an extraordinary event and for many, the impact of COVID 19 will be a significant reduction or complete stop to their salary, income from self employment and otherwise. You may have concerns that you cannot afford your basic outgoings let alone spousal maintenance.

Equally a recipient of spousal maintenance may be frightened that, the payer of the spousal maintenance may stop making payments. For the recipient who is solely or incredibly reliant on maintenance as a result of low non maintenance income or income that has also ceased will be concerned as to the impact of COVID-19.

When a spousal maintenance order was made both the payer and recipient of spousal maintenance would have been advised that, a variation of a maintenance order during the course of that order is possible. The Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 permits variation of orders and applications to Court to consider such variation. The Court has the jurisdiction to either increase / reduce or in circumstances end a maintenance term based upon the specific facts of a case. The Court is required to consider the changes in the circumstances that have arisen since the

original order was made. A significant change of circumstances can enable the Court to revisit and vary the original maintenance order. Income and income needs will be considered on both sides. The Court's concern when dealing with such applications will be whether, under the normal circumstances, can the needs of both parties and the children be met.

So far very little is known about as to what principles the Court may apply in the current extraordinary crisis given the developing extraordinary situation which seems to be changing on a daily basis. The Court has jurisdiction and wide discretion. The Court can be creative and consider whether the person who is supposed to pay the maintenance has any other capital resources or alternative income to which would enable the payer to continue payments.

Similarly, if the recipient of maintenance has lost an alternative income stream as a result of COVID 19 the Court may consider an uplift to the original spousal maintenance order to ensure that needs of recipient and any children are met.

My advice to those who find themselves in this situation at present is to see whether an interim solution can be agreed. An application to Court can be expensive. You need to consider how proportionate it is to incur costs of litigation versus what it is you hope to recover or achieve at Court. Those who are considering an application ought to be mindful that it could take the Court 6 to

12 months for this to be resolved. At present there are a reduced number of courts and therefore timeframes for an application to be dealt with are likely to be delayed. The Courts are considering urgent child protection cases as a priority. Cases regarding financial matters are not necessarily considered to be as urgent.

Given that COVID 19 may be a temporary issue, and may not impact upon longer term financial circumstances, it is difficult to predict what the Court's view may be. The longer term impact on income and the economy is not yet known. Therefore, the income issues that you may be experiencing now may not be something that you are experiencing in, say, 3 or 4 months. It is expected to take 3 or 4 months before you will attend Court for your initial hearing.

As mentioned above, the cost of a Court application could outweigh the amount you are seeking to recover by way of maintenance enforcement, reduce by a variation downwards, or increase by a maintenance variation uplift.

My strong recommendation is therefore to consider alternatives to the Court process to include potentially mediation or negotiations either personally or via solicitors. Please do contact me if you require any further advice or assistance.

Jennifer Allen, Director

☎ 01242 574244

✉ jal@hughes-paddison.co.uk

USEFUL LINKS

Statement from the President of the Family Division

www.judiciary.uk/announcements/coronavirus-crisis-guidance-on-compliance-with-family-court-child-arrangement-orders/

CAFCASS www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/parents-and-carers/covid-19-guidance-for-children-and-families/

Resolution www.resolution.org.uk/resolution-is-here-to-help-you/

KEEPING IN TOUCH

To receive future updates please e-mail Nigel Ledger nl@hughes-paddison.co.uk to request to join our mailing list. Updates will all also be published regularly at hughes-paddison.co.uk
Stay safe and keep in touch.

