

More information on Civil Partnerships

in Northern Ireland is available from the Office of Law Reform, Lancashire House, 5 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8AA, email info@olrni.gov.uk, or visit www.olrni.gov.uk.

If you are considering registering a civil partnership in Scotland contact www.gro-scotland.gov.uk, or in England and Wales contact www.gro.gov.uk.

For information on:

Social Security Benefits - contact the Benefits Helpline on 0800 220 674

Tax Credits - contact the Tax Credits Helpline (NI) 0845 603 2000

Child Benefit - contact the Child Benefit Helpline (NI) 0845 603 2000

Child Support - contact 0845 7139896 (existing scheme cases) or 0845 6080022 (new scheme cases)

Pensions - contact the Pension Service 028 9054 9393

Domestic Violence - contact the 24 hour Helpline on 0800 9171414

Relationship Support - contact RELATE (NI) Glengall Street on 0870 242 6091

Immigration - the Immigration and Nationality Directorate on 0870 606 7766

If this document is not in a format that suits your requirements, please:

Telephone: 028 9052 3183

Fax: 028 9052 3323

Textphone: 028 9052 2526

Email: admin.gender@ofmdfmi.gov.uk



Office of the

**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk



Department of

**Finance and
Personnel**

www.dfpmi.gov.uk

ARE YOU CONSIDERING
forming a
Civil Partnership?

THE CIVIL
PARTNERSHIP
ACT 2004

Office of Law Reform
Department of Finance
and Personnel

THE CIVIL PARTNERSHIP ACT 2004

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 becomes law on 5th December 2005 and will apply in Northern Ireland, as well as in Scotland and England and Wales. The Act will enable same-sex couples to form a civil partnership. Once registered, civil partners will generally enjoy all the same rights and responsibilities as married couples.

Further guidance dealing with civil partnership in Northern Ireland is available at www.olrni.gov.uk.

Who can form a civil partnership?

You will be able to form a civil partnership if you and your partner are:

- Of the same sex
- Over 16 (with consent if under 18)
- Not already married or in a civil partnership
- Not closely related to each other
- Understand the nature of civil partnership

How to register a civil partnership

Registrars in each council area in Northern Ireland will carry out civil partnership registrations. A couple must each give at least 14 days' notice (preferably 3 months) to the registrar of the intention to form a civil partnership.

The registration of the civil partnership will occur when the couple sign the civil partnership schedule (issued by the registrar) in front of two witnesses and the registrar. The registration can take place either in a registry office or at a place approved by the local council.

If you wish to register a civil partnership in Northern Ireland contact your local registrar or go to www.groni.gov.uk.

The Financial Implications

Forming a civil partnership will have an effect on your finances.

Benefits and Tax Credits - From 5th December, the income of a civil partner or cohabiting same - sex partner will be taken into account when calculating entitlement to income-related benefits and tax credits.

Pensions - From 5th December 2005 civil partners will have most of the same state pensions rights as husbands. Civil partners will also be entitled to a survivor's pension from their partner's pension scheme if it currently pays survivor benefits to widows and widowers.

Tax - Civil partners will be treated in the same way as married couples for all tax purposes, including inheritance tax and capital gains tax.

Employment

It is already unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation. Civil partners will have additional protections and employers will be required to treat civil partners employees in the same way as they treat married employees.

Children and Maintenance

Some civil partners will have responsibility for caring for children. Civil partners will be able to acquire parental responsibility for their partner's children on application to a court. Civil partners will have a duty to provide maintenance for each other and for any children of the relationship.

How a civil partnership ends

A civil partnership ends on the death of one of the couple, or if the civil partnership is dissolved or annulled by a court. The grounds for dissolving a civil partnership are:

- Unreasonable behaviour
- 2 years' separation (with consent)
- 5 years' separation (without consent)
- One civil partner has deserted the other for 2 years

If a couple do not wish to end their civil partnership they can ask a court to make an order for judicial separation.

When a court dissolves the civil partnership or makes an order for judicial separation it can also deal with maintenance and other property issues arising between the couple, as well as issues concerning any children of the partnership.

On the death of a civil partner

When one partner dies the other civil partner will be treated in the same way as a widow or widower when it comes to issues such as:

- Inheriting property
- Inheriting a tenancy
- Life insurance
- Fatal accidents compensation
- Criminal injuries compensation

