

## Recession forcing warring couples to stay together

Growing numbers of warring couples are putting off getting divorced because they can't afford it in the current recession, a family law expert has warned. Michael Vale, an associate with Birmingham and Burton-on-Trent-based Else Solicitors, blames the troubled property market and the difficulty in selling houses. But if there is ever a good time to break up it is currently the husband who is in the box seat.

Normally there is a surge in divorce applications in the aftermath of Christmas as festive tensions prove the breaking point. However, Mr Vale points out on this occasion it appears not to have taken place; at least not to the same extent. He said: "I think it is probably right to say that the usual post Christmas surge in divorce cases hasn't happened. "I base this on talking to other practitioners. I have to say that my own experience has been quite 'good' in the sense that I am pretty busy. However, generally I think the point is accurate."

"The reason for the downturn in my view is that because of the difficulty in the property market people are putting off separation and divorce." "Of course it is usually the case that a former matrimonial home has to be sold to provide for re-housing for spouses and everyone knows how difficult it is to sell property right now."

"And obviously it is not just property that is difficult to sell, but because of the downturn in other investments raising decent capital funds is a problem." "But for those determined to press ahead it seems to be 'advantage husband'." Mr Vale said: "Some husbands might be more enthusiastic to divorce now given that their assets are less."

"Conversely, wives are less anxious to divorce because assets are low." Though, he points out, dependent on the financial status of the respective parties, in some cases this might equally apply in reverse. "Of course, the danger in all this is you get into a situation where a couple, desperate to see the back of each other, are forced to remain together."

"But being stuck in the family home barely speaking is not the way forward. They are effectively trapped, unable to make a new start and rebuild their lives."

"All too often tensions rise and that is a recipe for trouble." Mr Vale said he feared domestic violence cases would consequently jump. "That would be an extremely unwelcome consequence of the current recession," he added. "Wives, and in a tiny number of cases, husbands should never be prepared to put up with black eyes and bruises." "Get in touch with your solicitor and, if necessary, call in the police."



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