

FAMILY LAW SERVICES

MEDIA AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE PUBLIC EYE

AGREEMENTS, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Burgess Mee

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We are an award winning family law firm. We are experts in our field and are based in Clapham Common and Liverpool Street with meeting rooms in Hammersmith.



EARLY STRATEGIC ADVICE

The breakdown of relationships of high-profile individuals can attract press and public attention. Issues following a separation such as arrangements for the children and financial disputes are private, personal and often difficult for clients to navigate. This is made more challenging for high profile clients, given the rise of online news outlets, social media and the public commentary on these platforms.

We thoroughly explore with our high-profile clients, and advise upon, all issues at the outset. This provides the necessary reassurance to our clients and allows the individuals to focus on their careers. Whether the individual is a sports professional or in the music and entertainment industry, it is crucial that they have focus and energy to fulfil their role.

Our focus is to resolve the dispute in the way that the client feels is in their and their children's best interests. We aim to do this as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. Consideration must be given to the client's reputation and privacy. This often involves working closely with lawyers in other areas and PR professionals to ensure a cohesive and strategic approach to reputation management. It might include obtaining injunctions to stop the publication of rumours or stories. At Burgess Mee we have excellent relationships with reputation management lawyers who can help with urgent advice when stories break, as well as PR and crisis management firms.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Sometimes a family law dispute does end in court proceedings. For high-profile individuals, this brings with it the added complexity of court reporting. There is the possibility that the media will be present in court. There are also litigants who will use the limelight to apply pressure on the individual in the public eye. Knowing how to navigate the complex rules around court reporting is key.

While reporting restrictions can be obtained, the family justice system is committed to improving public understanding of family law proceedings. Recently, there has been a significant movement towards increased reporting within these proceedings, with what the courts sometimes refer to as 'The Transparency Project' or 'open justice'.

The recent case of Kyle Walker, the premier league footballer, and his former partner Lauryn Goodman, is an example of a widely reported case in which press involvement became a key feature. Disputes relating to the reporting of a case and anonymity of the parties can become expensive and stressful matters to litigate.





RESOLVING MATTERS OUT OF COURT

Helpfully, there are good options for resolving clients' disputes outside of court and therefore not subject to reporting. As an alternative to court litigation, we can act for high profile individuals in non-court dispute resolution processes (NCDR).

These might include:

- mediation with lawyers present
- an early neutral evaluation (appointing a legal professional to express a view about the outcome)
- a more formal process - a private Financial Dispute Resolution (FDR) appointment. This is where the parties appoint a private "judge" (usually a barrister, solicitor or retired judge) who gives a non-binding indication as to what the outcome of the case would be if it went to a final hearing, which helps the parties to negotiate an outcome
- arbitration, which is similar to the above but where the arbitrator hears evidence and the outcome is binding on the parties.

You can read further in our [Resolving your dispute out of court brochure](#).

There are multiple benefits to high-profile clients engaging in these non-court dispute resolution processes. The process can be tailored to their circumstances and the process will be quicker than formal litigation through the courts. The press will not be present at these processes, ensuring privacy for all involved. However it is important to note that these are voluntary processes, so there may be some disputes which cannot be resolved via these means and so they end up in court.

AGREEMENTS

The requirement for specialist advice also applies for clients when embarking upon a life event such as moving in with a partner, having a baby with someone or becoming engaged.

Many people aren't aware that having a child with someone or living with them, even when not married, can give rise to valuable claims in England and Wales for those who have high incomes or have accumulated wealth.

An increasing number of court decisions emphasize the decisive weight that a properly made agreement can carry if the relationship, marriage or cohabitation ends prematurely. With an agreement properly constructed and signed in advance, you can be confident that the negative impact of a rupture in that relationship will be minimised.

Our expert lawyers and mediators can help those in the public eye with early advice, drafting agreements and negotiating arrangements so that they can reach swift out of court settlements if things don't work out as planned.

You can read further in our [Prenuptial Agreements brochure](#).

ASSET PROTECTION

With success often comes financial reward. Many high-profile individuals use tax efficient structures. At Burgess Mee, we work with private client lawyers, financial advisors and tax specialists to ensure strategic advice is available to clients, doing all we can to protect their interests.





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If you would like to have more information about any of these options, please speak to a member of our team, whose details are set out below.



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