

Marriage and Civil Partnerships.



Since 2005, lesbian and gay couples in the UK have been able to have our relationships legally recognised. For many of us, this is very important – not just for our relationship, but also for how we are seen by our families, friends and colleagues. Some LGB people are happily married, while others, like many heterosexuals, reject marriage as a traditional institution.

Same-sex civil partnerships were introduced in 2005 and marriage was extended to same-sex couples in 2014. The 2021 census revealed that 133,618 people were in same-sex civil partnerships and 268,522 in same-sex marriages.

Registering our relationships brings a number of important benefits, including:

- **Next-of-kin status.** In the event of a health emergency, an unregistered partner can be excluded from vital decisions about their partner’s care or future. Other family members may make the important decisions.
- **Inheritance.** If someone dies without leaving a will, their property usually passes to their nearest relative. Again, an unregistered partner can find themselves excluded from inheriting and lose pension benefits.
- **Housing.** It is possible that surviving unregistered partners may lose their home. Spouses and civil partners have the right to continue a tenancy after the death of their partner, even if his/hers was the only name on the tenancy.
- **Children.** If someone has caring responsibilities for a child, this may not be recognised if the partnership is not registered. It is much easier to adopt a child of your spouse or civil partner.
- **Tax benefits.** A spouse or civil partner can transfer 10% of their personal tax allowance to their partner, reducing tax bills. Inheritance of property from a spouse or civil partner is exempt from inheritance tax and stamp duty on property.
- In cases of **domestic violence**, courts may be able to do more to protect you if you are a spouse or civil partner.
- **Immigration.** Ensuring that a non-British partner can obtain the right to live and work in the UK is easier if you are in a registered partnership. The same is true for emigrating.

To enter into a civil partnership or marriage, you need to contact your local authority to register your intention and make arrangements. Same-sex civil partnerships and marriages are practically the same and are carried out by the local registrar. Whereas heterosexual marriages can take place in a church, most churches will not carry out a same-sex marriage although some are willing to bless partnerships.

Civil partnerships and marriages can be ended but this is a much more formal process than simply splitting from an unregistered relationship.

All information on this page is based on official guidance and current law.

More information:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/living-together-marriage-and-civil-partnership/living-together-and-civil-partnership-legal-differences/>