

GUIDANCE ON CIVIL PARTNERSHIP REGISTRATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND



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INTRODUCTION

This leaflet is based on the Civil Partnership Act 2004 and gives general guidance on civil partnerships registrations in Northern Ireland.

While the leaflet should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law, it is hoped that the following information will be helpful to you in the planning of your civil partnership registration.

1. WHO CAN ENTER INTO CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

Any two persons, regardless of where they live, may enter into a civil partnership in Northern Ireland provided that:

- both persons are at least 16 years of age on the day of the civil partnership registration. Persons over 16 years and under 18 years of age require parental consent;
- they are not related to one another in a way, which would prevent their civil partnership registration (see the list at the end of this leaflet);
- they are unmarried or are not already in a civil partnership (any person who has already been married or in a civil partnership must produce documentary evidence that the previous marriage has been ended by death, divorce or annulment, or the previous civil partnership has been dissolved);
- they are of the same sex;
- they are capable of understanding the nature of a civil partnership.

2. MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

It is important to make early arrangements for the date and time of your civil partnership registration. Registrars have busy schedules and in order to obtain the date of your choice, you should plan well in advance to avoid disappointment.

- You should arrange for two persons, aged 16 years or over, to be present at your civil partnership registration to act as witnesses.
- You should be sure to let the Registrar know if you change your plans or decide to postpone your civil partnership registration.

3. CHOICE OF VENUE

The civil partnership registration may take place in a Registrar's Office or at an approved place. (A place approved for marriage may not necessarily be approved for civil partnership.) A list of approved places for the area in which you wish to have civil partnership registration may be obtained from:-

- the Registrar of the District where the civil partnership is being registered.
- the Civil Partnership Section of the General Register Office for Northern Ireland at the address stated on the back cover; or
- the General Register Office for Northern Ireland website at www.groni.gov.uk.

Alternatively If you wish to apply for a temporary approval for civil partnership registration at a place of your own choice, such as your own home, you should contact the Registrar of the District in which the civil partnership will be registered who will advise you about the fee and the application procedure.

4. COMPLETION OF THE CIVIL PARTNERSHIP NOTICE FORM

By law, each party to a proposed civil partnership registration is required to complete a Civil Partnership Notice form. These forms can be obtained from any of the addresses shown in Section 3 or can be downloaded from www.groni.gov.uk/civil-partnerships.

- It is important to understand that by signing the Notice you are making a declaration to the effect that the particulars and information given on the Notice are correct.
- Persons related in any of the ways listed in Section 11 of this leaflet, where civil partnership registration is allowed, will be required to sign a separate declaration form, which like the Civil Partnership Notice form is obtainable from any Civil Registrar in Northern Ireland.

5. DOCUMENTS TO BE PRODUCED

The following original documents will be required if the circumstances apply to you:-

- your passport and or birth certificate;
- if you have previously entered into a civil partnership, the Court Order stating that the civil partnership has been dissolved;
- if you have been married before and the marriage was dissolved, a certificate of Decree Absolute. A decree of divorce granted either in or outside of Northern Ireland must be absolute or final – a decree nisi is not acceptable;
- if you are divorced, and you have retained your married name, your previous Marriage certificate;
- if your previous spouse or civil partner is deceased, the death certificate of your former spouse, or of your deceased civil partner;
- if you and the person you are entering into a civil partnership with are related in any of the ways listed in Section 11.
- if any of these documents is in a language other than English, a certified translation in English must also be provided.

Do not delay giving notice simply because you are waiting for any of the documents mentioned above to come to hand. If time is getting short it is better to give notice first and then pass the documents to the Registrar when they become available but they must be made available to the Registrar before the civil partnership registration. Provided the documents, are in order the civil partnership registration may proceed as arranged.

Note: Photocopies of documents are not acceptable unless certified to be a true copy by the issuing authority.

6. NON EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA NATIONALS

Persons intending to enter into a civil partnership registration in Northern Ireland who are not nationals of countries within the European Economic Area and are subject to immigration control will have to obtain the following:-

- (a) a valid visa or entry clearance as a civil partnership visitor. These are granted by a British Embassy, Consulate or High Commission abroad; or
- (b) a Certificate of Civil Partnership Approval. Applications forms can be obtained from the Home Office; or
- (c) a settled status in the UK such as unrestricted right to remain.

7. INTERPRETERS

The onus is on the parties to provide an interpreter who will be required to sign a declaration to the effect that (s)he is able to understand the language in respect of which (s)he is to act as an interpreter at the civil partnership registration. After the registration (s)he must give the person registering the civil partnership a certificate written in English and signed by the interpreter that (s)he has faithfully acted as interpreter at the civil partnership proceedings.

8. HOW AND WHEN TO GIVE NOTICE FOR CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Both parties must submit their completed Civil Partnership Notice Forms, relevant documents, declarations and fees to the Registrar of the District where the civil partnership registration is to take place, to inform the Registrar of their intention to enter a civil partnership.

The notice forms may be submitted in person or by post to the Registrar.

Timing is important

- Notice for all civil partnership registrations must be given to the Registrars in the twelve month period prior to the date of the civil partnership registration.

- The Notices must be submitted early enough to enable the Registrar to be satisfied that both parties are free to enter into a civil partnership with one another.
- Normally Notices should be with the Registrar about EIGHT weeks before the civil partnership registration but if either of you have been married before, or have entered into a previous civil partnership, the Notices should be with the Registrar **TEN** weeks beforehand.
- The **minimum** period is **fourteen days before the date of the proposed civil partnership registration**, but if you leave things as late as this you could be faced with the need to postpone your civil partnership registration.
- Only in **exceptional circumstances** will the Registrar General authorise a civil partnership registration to take place if fourteen days' notice has not been given.

9. THE CIVIL PARTNERSHIP SCHEDULE

- When the Registrar is satisfied there is no legal impediment to the civil partnership registration, a Civil Partnership Schedule will be prepared from the information which the parties have supplied.
- The Registrar will ensure that the Civil Partnership Schedule is available for signature at the the civil partnership registration.
- A fee for the civil partnership registration and if applicable, for the attendance of an authorised Registrar at an approved place is payable to the Registrar at the time of notice.

10. CIVIL PARTNERSHIP CERTIFICATE

After the civil partnership registration you can obtain a copy of the civil partnership certificate from the Registrar on payment of the appropriate fee.

11. TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WITHIN WHICH CIVIL PARTNERSHIP IS UNLAWFUL

Absolute prohibitions

- (i) Two people are within prohibited degrees of relationship if one falls within the list below in relation to the other.
 - Adoptive child
 - Adoptive parent
 - Child
 - Former adoptive child
 - Former adoptive parent
 - Grandparent
 - Grandchild
 - Parent
 - Parent's sibling
 - Sibling
 - Sibling's child

(ii) In the list “sibling” means a brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister.

Qualified prohibitions

2. (i) Two people are within prohibited degrees of relationship if one falls within the list below in relation to the other, unless:-

- (a) both of them have reached 21 at the time when they register as civil partners of each other; and
- (b) the younger has not at any time before reaching 18 been a child of the family in relation to the other.

Child of former civil partner
Child of former spouse
Former civil partner of grandparent
Former civil partner of parent
Former spouse of grandparent
Former spouse of parent
Grandchild of former civil partner
Grandchild of former spouse

(ii) “Child of the family”, in relation to another person, means a person who:-

- (a) has lived in the same household as that other person; and
- (b) has been treated by that other person as a child of his family.

3. Two people are within prohibited degrees of relationship if one falls within column 1 of the table below in relation to the other, unless:-

- (a) both of them have reached 21 at the time when they register as civil partners of each other; and
- (b) the persons who fall within column 2 are dead.

Relationship	Relevant details
Former civil partner of child	The child The child’s other parent
Former spouse of child	The child The child’s other parent
Parent of former civil partner	The former civil partner The former civil partner’s other parent
Parent of former spouse	The former spouse The former spouse’s other parent

12. GENERAL INFORMATION

Fees

The fees payable are set out on a separate leaflet enclosed.

Persons under eighteen years of age

Written consent on a prescribed form (normally completed by both parents), or if appropriate an order of a court dispensing with consent, is needed for the civil partnership registration of anyone under eighteen years of age, irrespective of where the person under eighteen years of age lives. Consent forms may be obtained from the Registrar.

Objections

An objection may be lodged with a Registrar against the issue of the Civil Partnership Schedule.

Further guidance should be sought from the Registrar concerned.

Witnesses

The parties must arrange for two witnesses to be present at the civil partnership registration and to sign the civil partnership register. Witnesses must be 16 years of age or over.

Penalty for making false statement

A person who makes a false statement for the purpose of bringing about or preventing a civil partnership, is guilty of **perjury** and may be liable to prosecution.

If, after reading the leaflet, you are still in doubt, you should seek advice from any Registrar in Northern Ireland or from the:-

General Register Office,
Oxford House,
49-55 Chichester Street,
Belfast,
BT1 4HL.
Telephone: (028) 9025 2036/37
Fax: (028) 9025 2136
www.groni.gov.uk

GRO434

Published by

**General Register Office
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BELFAST BT1 4HL**

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www.groni.gov.uk