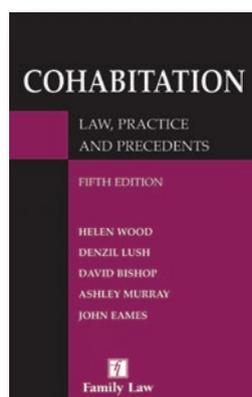




Better together?

The Law Commission's recent intestacy research report makes cohabitation an important issue for private client solicitors. **Andrew Kidd** and **Richard Roberts** review the fifth edition of Jordans' practical book on cohabitation law



Cohabitation: Law, Practice and Precedents (5th edition)

Authors: Helen Wood, Denzil Lush, David Bishop, Ashley Murray and John Eames

Publisher: Jordans

Published: January 2012

ISBN: 978 1 84661 283 1

Price: £90

Readers will welcome this comprehensive and authoritative work on an area of human interaction which is gaining social prominence and legal importance. Indeed, its legal status in the private client arena was fully and publicly explored in the Law Commission's 2009 consultation paper *Intestacy and Family Provision Claims on Death*, which looked at, *inter alia*, whether certain cohabitants should have a place in the intestacy rules, and, if so, the conditions which would have to be met, and how much of the estate they should receive. That fascinating study, and its findings, which were reported on last autumn, was a telling insight into how the law might be reformed to keep pace with societal changes.

All this makes for a timely fifth edition of Jordans' *Cohabitation: Law, Practice and Precedents*, which presents an important vision of things to come.

Written by leaders in their field,

representing both practitioners and the judiciary, the book brings together all the many legal and practical issues practitioners face when advising cohabiting clients, those considering cohabiting, or those experiencing issues with cohabiting members of their family or others with whom they encounter legal issues. The legal treatment of such relationships is frequently less clear than with those clients in formal unions, and this book distils that treatment into navigable chapters and sensible commentary which is both up-to-date and comprehensive, and in a manner which can be easily worked into a form a lay client will understand and appreciate. The authors clearly had clients

The Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975 is helpfully dealt with alongside cohabitation issues, which are, of course, the provenance of many of such claims

in mind when producing this work, which makes life easier for the practitioner.

The 'Death and Succession' chapter will be of particular utility to private client practitioners. It reminds us of the important basics, and goes on to bring together children and other family issues very neatly. It also sets out how to go about an application under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975 – the act is certainly covered plentifully in other works, but this book helpfully deals with it directly alongside cohabitation issues, which are, of course,

the provenance of many of such claims.

The 'Procedural Guides' section provides readers with a mine of up-to-date information on a number of issues related to cohabitation, and must surely answer any question a practitioner new to this area might have. Similarly, the checklists and precedents (both non-contentious and contentious) bring together signposts and substantive documents, which are both user-friendly (a soft copy is provided on CD) and invaluable.

A miscellaneous chapter is included at the end of the book, which brings together some scenarios which, while less common, are of no less importance; this marks the work out as comprehensive, and the resource of first resort for those practitioners advising cohabiting couples.

The rest of the book may be of less immediate relevance to the private client practitioner, since we may not specifically advise on cohabitation agreements, children issues or cohabitation and welfare benefits, for example. However, it is extremely interesting to have an overview of the issues, all within the covers of one book, so that we are more alert to the issues and can bring in the right advisors and at the right time.

More practically, the layout of the book makes the contents clear and easily accessible, and the order is logical and allows the reader to pilot between the different elements of the book with ease and confidence.

We have no doubt this book will be a valuable and cost-effective addition to any private client practitioner's library. ■

Andrew Kidd is an associate of New Quadrant Partners. **Richard Roberts** is senior director of Gedye & Sons Solicitors and chair of the Law Society's wills and equity committee.