



Matrimonial Causes Act 1973

1973 CHAPTER 18

PART II

FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR PARTIES TO MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN OF FAMILY

Maintenance agreements

34 Validity of maintenance agreements.

- (1) If a maintenance agreement includes a provision purporting to restrict any right to apply to a court for an order containing financial arrangements, then—
- (a) that provision shall be void; but
 - (b) any other financial arrangements contained in the agreement shall not thereby be rendered void or unenforceable and shall, unless they are void or unenforceable for any other reason (and subject to sections 35 and 36 below), be binding on the parties to the agreement.

- (2) In this section and in section 35 below—

“maintenance agreement” means any agreement in writing made, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, between the parties to a marriage, being—

- (a) an agreement containing financial arrangements, whether made during the continuance or after the dissolution or annulment of the marriage; or
- (b) a separation agreement which contains no financial arrangements in a case where no other agreement in writing between the same parties contains such arrangements;

“financial arrangements” means provisions governing the rights and liabilities towards one another when living separately of the parties to a marriage (including a marriage which has been dissolved or annulled) in respect of the making or securing of payments or the disposition or use of any property, including such rights and liabilities with respect to the maintenance or education of any child, whether or not a child of the family.

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35 Alteration of agreements by court during lives of parties.

(1) Where a maintenance agreement is for the time being subsisting and each of the parties to the agreement is for the time being either domiciled or resident in England and Wales, then ^{F1}... either party may apply to the court ^{F2}... for an order under this section.

^{F3}(1A)

(2) If the court ^{F4}... is satisfied either—

- (a) that by reason of a change in the circumstances in the light of which any financial arrangements contained in the agreement were made or, as the case may be, financial arrangements were omitted from it (including a change foreseen by the parties when making the agreement), the agreement should be altered so as to make different, or, as the case may be, so as to contain, financial arrangements, or
- (b) that the agreement does not contain proper financial arrangements with respect to any child of the family,

then subject to [^{F5}subsections] (4) and (5) below, [^{F6}the court] may by order make such alterations in the agreement—

- (i) by varying or revoking any financial arrangements contained in it, or
- (ii) by inserting in it financial arrangements for the benefit of one of the parties to the agreement or of a child of the family,

as may appear to [^{F6}the court] to be just having regard to all the circumstances, including, if relevant, the matters mentioned in [^{F7}section 25(4)] above; and the agreement shall have effect thereafter as if any alteration made by the order had been made by agreement between the parties and for valuable consideration.

^{F8}(3)

(4) Where [^{F9}the court] decides to alter, by order under this section, an agreement by inserting provision for the making or securing by one of the parties to the agreement of periodical payments for the maintenance of the other party or by increasing the rate of the periodical payments which the agreement provides shall be made by one of the parties for the maintenance of the other, the term for which the payments or, as the case may be, the additional payments attributable to the increase are to be made under the agreement as altered by the order shall be such term as the court may specify, subject to the following limits, that is to say—

- (a) where the payments will not be secured, the term shall be so defined as not to extend beyond the death of either of the parties to the agreement or the remarriage of [^{F10}, or formation of a civil partnership by,] the party to whom the payments are to be made;
- (b) where the payments will be secured, the term shall be so defined as not to extend beyond the death or remarriage of [^{F10}, or formation of a civil partnership by,] that party.

(5) Where [^{F9}the court] decides to alter, by order under this section, an agreement by inserting provision for the making or securing by one of the parties to the agreement of periodical payments for the maintenance of a child of the family or by increasing the rate of the periodical payments which the agreement provides shall be made or secured by one of the parties for the maintenance of such a child, then, in deciding the term for which under the agreement as altered by the order the payments, or as the case may be, the additional payments attributable to the increase are to be made or secured for the benefit of the child, the court shall apply the provisions of section 29(2) and

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(3) above as to age limits as if the order in question were a periodical payments or secured periodical payments order in favour of the child.

(6) For the avoidance of doubt it is hereby declared that nothing in this section or in section 34 above affects any power of a court before which any proceedings between the parties to a maintenance agreement are brought under any other enactment (including a provision of this Act) to make an order containing financial arrangements or any right of either party to apply for such an order in such proceedings.

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 35(1) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of [The Jurisdiction and Judgments \(Family\) \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#) (S.I. 2019/519), reg. 1(1), **Sch. para. 6(3)(a)** (with reg. 8) (as amended by [S.I. 2020/1574](#), regs. 1, 5(2)); 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F2** Words in s. 35(1) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013](#) (c. 22), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 62(2)**; [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F3** S. 35(1A) omitted (31.12.2020) by virtue of [The Jurisdiction and Judgments \(Family\) \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#) (S.I. 2019/519), reg. 1(1), **Sch. para. 6(3)(b)** (with reg. 8) (as amended by [S.I. 2020/1574](#), regs. 1, 5(2)); 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)
- F4** Words in s. 35(2) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013](#) (c. 22), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 62(3)(a)**; [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F5** Word in s. 35(2) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013](#) (c. 22), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 62(3)(b)**; [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F6** Words in s. 35(2) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013](#) (c. 22), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 62(3)(c)**; [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F7** Words substituted by [Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984](#) (c. 42, SIF 49:3), ss. 46(1), 48(3), **Sch. 1 para. 13(a)**
- F8** S. 35(3) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013](#) (c. 22), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 62(4)**; [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F9** Words in s. 35(4)(5) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013](#) (c. 22), s. 61(3), **Sch. 11 para. 62(5)**; [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11); [S.I. 2014/954](#), art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in [S.I. 2014/956](#), arts. 3-11)
- F10** Words in s. 35(4)(a)(b) inserted (5.12.2005) by [Civil Partnership Act 2004](#) (c. 33), ss. 261(1), 263, **Sch. 27 para. 44**; [S.I. 2005/3175](#), **art. 2(2)** (subject to art. 2(3)-(5))

36 Alteration of agreements by court after death of one party.

- (1) Where a maintenance agreement within the meaning of section 34 above provides for the continuation of payments under the agreement after the death of one of the parties and that party dies domiciled in England and Wales, the surviving party or the personal representatives of the deceased party may, subject to subsections (2) and (3) below, apply to the ^{F11}... court for an order under section 35 above.
- (2) An application under this section shall not, except with the permission of the ^{F12}... court, be made after the end of the period of six months from the date on which representation in regard to the estate of the deceased is first taken out.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, Cross Heading: Maintenance agreements. (See end of Document for details)

^{F13}(3)

- (4) If a maintenance agreement is altered by [^{F14}the court] on an application made in pursuance of subsection (1) above, the like consequences shall ensue as if the alteration had been made immediately before the death by agreement between the parties and for valuable consideration.
- (5) The provisions of this section shall not render the personal representatives of the deceased liable for having distributed any part of the estate of the deceased after the expiration of the period of six months referred to in subsection (2) above on the ground that they ought to have taken into account the possibility that [^{F14}the court] might permit an application by virtue of this section to be made by the surviving party after that period; but this subsection shall not prejudice any power to recover any part of the estate so distributed arising by virtue of the making of an order in pursuance of this section.
- (6) Section 31(9) above shall apply for the purposes of subsection (2) above as it applies for the purposes of subsection (6) of section 31.

^{F15}(7)

Textual Amendments

- F11** Words in s. 36(1) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 11 para. 63\(2\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F12** Words in s. 36(2) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 11 para. 63\(3\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F13** S. 36(3) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 11 para. 63\(4\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F14** Words in s. 36(4)(5) substituted (22.4.2014) by [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 11 para. 63\(5\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)
- F15** S. 36(7) omitted (22.4.2014) by virtue of [Crime and Courts Act 2013 \(c. 22\)](#), s. 61(3), [Sch. 11 para. 63\(4\)](#); S.I. 2014/954, art. 2(e) (with art. 3) (with transitional provisions and savings in S.I. 2014/956, arts. 3-11)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 36(1) amended by [Inheritance \(Provision for Family and Dependents\) Act 1975 \(c. 63\)](#), s. 18
- C2** S. 36(1) amended by [Forfeiture Act 1982 \(c. 34, SIF 116:1, 2\)](#), [ss. 3\(2\)\(b\)](#), 7(3)

Changes to legislation:

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