Divorce Without Debt launched to protect women from predatory litigation funders

- New Non-Profit Campaign Group *Divorce Without Debt* founded by women affected by predatory litigation funders. Women were saddled with debt and left with severe mental health issues following advice from legal advisers to take out high-risk loans.
- The launch comes during Mental Health Awareness Week, highlighting the need for more awareness of the risks of taking out these loans.
- Group wants to support other women and call for government intervention to prevent similar harms in the future.

LONDON (14 May 2026) Divorce Without Debt (DWD), a new campaign group founded by women in the UK who were left in severe debt after taking out loans to fund their divorces has launched today, calling on the Government to act urgently to address what it describes as a growing consumer harm in family law.

Divorce Without Debt is calling for more protections against profit-driven litigation funders. The financial and mental health burdens of divorce are already well documented and DWD's founders argue that high-risk loans exacerbate the problems. By documenting and recording the impacts of these loans, Divorce Without Debt is holding a mirror up to the divorce funding industry.

Since the removal of most civil legal aid from private family law cases under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2013 (LASPO), a market for litigation funding has grown to fill the gap. These loans typically carry compound interest over cases that can run for several years. Women who have contacted Divorce Without Debt report that, in some cases, repayments have consumed a substantial portion of their divorce settlement - and in some instances, the full amount or more.

Launching during Mental Health Awareness Week, Divorce Without Debt is urging the Ministry of Justice to ensure that vulnerable families are not left carrying life-altering financial burdens in the pursuit of justice and fairness. The group is calling for urgent action to introduce greater transparency, consumer protections, and regulatory oversight in this area.

> *"Divorce litigation funding has become a system that can potentially drain every penny from loans taken out by vulnerable women - while they and their families carry so much risk. We have lived through this and want to help prevent more women from being targeted and falling victim to these loans. We want to ensure no one is forced to put their home on the line just to get through a divorce."*
>
> **— Rosie Heys, Founder, Divorce Without Debt**

THE PROBLEM

In 2023, there were over 100,000 divorces in England Wales[1]. Contested divorces often leave marital homes and finances in limbo. In the absence of legal aid, women often find themselves in financial difficulty during these periods, facing significant legal fees as well as day-to-day costs. Currently, 85% of litigation funding applications in UK family law are made by women.

Increasingly, legal advisers and lenders themselves are encouraging people to take out divorce loans or litigation loans. These loans are typically high-interest and are paid out of final settlements or on the sale of the family home. Some lenders market themselves as requiring minimal checks, instead looking at potential settlements only.

There are several reported cases in which women have faced significant personal suffering and profound mental health impacts as a result of taking out these loans. Women contacting Divorce Without Debt report that the total cost, impact of compounding, and repayment terms were not clearly understood at the point of signing. Some have also raised concerns about solicitor–funder relationships and a lack of disclosure.

> *“I was pressured into taking out a loan to fund my divorce, believing it was my only option. It ultimately forced me to sell my home, and the financial and emotional toll is something I’m still trying to recover from.”*
>
> **— Shelley Kavanagh, Divorce Without Debt**

[1] Office for National Statistics: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/divorce/bulletins/divorcesinenglandandwales/2023

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

Divorce Without Debt wants to raise awareness of the potential harms of divorce loans to protect more women from being affected and to support those already impacted.

We call on the government to:

1. **Fairness & Transparency in Legal Funding**

   To ensure that all litigation funding arrangements in family law meet clear standards of transparency, including mandatory disclosure of total projected costs, compounding effects over time, and any financial relationships between solicitors and funders.

2. **Proportionate & Safe Use of Litigation Funding in Family Law**

   To establish safeguards ensuring that litigation funding in family law is used proportionately and does not expose individuals to outcomes where debt outweighs or erodes the value of their settlement.

3. **Minimum Consumer Protections Equivalent to Mainstream Lending**

   To advocate for baseline consumer protections in family law litigation funding, including cost projections, cooling-off periods, and appropriate regulatory oversight comparable to other forms of high-risk lending.

4. **Targeted Support for Those Already Affected**

   To provide independent, trauma-informed support and practical guidance to individuals experiencing debt and financial distress following divorce litigation funding.

> *"I made 65 applications in the family courts and I won every one. But instead of resolution, I was left in debt. Litigation loans didn't help—they made everything worse. No one should have to endure that kind of financial and emotional strain just to get through divorce. It's time for accountability."*
>
> **— Michelle Young, Divorce Without Debt**

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Women affected by divorce litigation funding can share their experiences anonymously at divorcewithoutdebt.co.uk.

www.divorcewithoutdebt.co.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Divorce Without Debt

Divorce Without Debt is a UK-based non-profit founded in 2026 by survivors of litigation funding debt. The organisation provides peer support, financial literacy resources, and political advocacy to protect women from predatory lending practices during divorce disputes. The group is self-funded and accepts no money from litigation funders, solicitor practices, or any party with a financial interest in family court proceedings.

Statistics & Sources

85% figure: Hughes Fowler Carruthers 16-firm survey, reported in Legal Futures, July 2023.

LASPO: Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2013, s.8–9, Schedule 1.

Editorial Notes

Spokespeople are available for interview. The founding members are willing to speak on background or on record. Named survivors are available for interview subject to individual consent.

MEDIA CONTACT

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