

Who gets the house?

Buying property with a friend or lover can cause problems in the long-run. Take legal advice first says Caroline Sherry, Head of Property at Glazer Delmar Solicitors

Tempting though it is to pool resources when faced with sky-high property prices, the most blissful of love affairs can be sorely tested by the ups and downs of ownership. You can end up broke, as well as heartbroken.

Nuala and Asher were in their late 20s and had been together for two years. The only flaw in their happiness was their living arrangements – they were both fed up with renting. One Sunday lunchtime, they decided buying together was the obvious solution.

They did their sums and looked at three bedroom flats, so that they could rent a room if things got tight, and after a few disappointments, they bought one with three good bedrooms and a medium-sized garden for barbecues in the summer.

Two years later, they don't feel much like having barbecues. Six months after they moved in Nuala announced she wasn't happy – Asher left all the domestic chores to her, and was always out with his mates. Asher said she'd completely changed since they started living together and he'd met someone else.

Now the real problems start. Nuala says she is entitled to more money from the flat sale because she paid more of the mortgage – Asher says his parents' deposit was bigger than hers. Neither wants to move out, and they don't want to bring friends – or heaven forbid, a new romance – into the frozen atmosphere.

The key thing is to take legal advice before things turn sour, not afterwards. Draw up a trust deed before you even think about buying



together. It sets out exactly who is entitled to what, from the deposit to the share of the mortgage. If one trustee pays more, the deed will record that and they can take more out when they leave. And the deposit amount will be set out in writing so there can be no argument about it.

A trust deed can't heal the heartbreak, but it can make it easier to move on, without a big hole in your bank account.

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