

## PRESS RELEASE

**When the man of your dreams starts giving you nightmares**

Millicent Fawcett, born and raised in Aldeburgh, was a leading women's rights activist in the late 1800s and early 1900s. She was one of the founders of the Women's Suffrage Movement and became president of the National Union of Suffrage Societies (NUSS). The NUSS campaigned for women's right to vote by taking a moderate approach while Emmeline Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) believed militancy would get faster results. By 1918 the seemingly impossible had been achieved: women over the age of 30 could vote; in 1928 the age was reduced to 21 to be on a par with men. The metaphorical line in the sand, keeping women in their place and in the home, was slowly but surely being worn away.

For some women today, when faced with divorce or separation, it's as if the suffrage movement never existed. The end of a relationship can be the start of a long and drawn out emotional nightmare. People can find themselves suffering harassment, abuse and intimidation and can often feel as if there is no way out. **Except that there is, says Michelle Ellie, Family Solicitor at Bury firm, Atkins Thomson.** It won't always be easy, but there are definite practical steps you can take to protect yourself and even more importantly, if you're a parent, your children.

First you need to get legal advice from someone who specialises in family law. You can then arm yourself with as much information as possible, know where you stand and this, in turn, will make you feel more confident. Not all solicitors are the same, so do some research before you proceed – a good one is a great asset. Remember they are there to help you achieve your goals and to deal with matters on your behalf. If you are in a difficult position financially then contact the Citizens Advice Bureau, you may discover you're entitled to legal aid or free legal advice services. They can also provide guidance on any benefits you may now be eligible for as a lone parent or a single person.

Next, and this can be quite tough to do but it is effective, you have to take control. It is vital in order to move forward that you make the decision to take back your power in the relationship. You must be determined and mean business, get tough and follow things through. Empty threats will only act

as an endorsement of your partner's power over you. This is the time to make a stand and only 'you' can do it.

You'll have to set the necessary wheels in motion which will help you to become independent. If you want to have as little involvement with your partner as possible, contact with the children can be arranged using a third party who could agree to collect and return them, or you could take them to a third party's house. There are also contact centres run by volunteers so that the children can have time with your partner, but you don't have to be present. You can arrange to have direct debits set up from his account to yours so he doesn't need to bring payments in person.

It could however require more serious actions like issuing a restraining order to prevent further abuse or harassment. Whatever the steps, take them one at a time with absolute resolution and without looking back. There are people around you who want to help. Reach out to them and don't let pride or embarrassment prevent you from getting the practical help and emotional support you need.

For information on Family Law, contact Michelle Ellis or Louise Cardwell on 01284 767766 or go to [www.atkinsthomson.com](http://www.atkinsthomson.com)

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