

## Closing old bank accounts

If you have any kind of joint bank accounts or credit cards, it's essential that you act to stop them as a matter of urgency. An ex-partner can not only empty the account, but they can also rack up huge debts (either as overdrafts or credit cards) that you will be liable for. We recommend the following steps:

### **Contact the bank to say the account is in dispute.**

When two or more people open a joint bank account, they have to sign a form called a mandate. The mandate sets out things like – for example - who can sign cheques and take money out.

Either named person can cancel this mandate without the others permission: you can therefore cancel the joint account mandate straight away and this will lead to the account being frozen. Although you can no longer access their money, neither can your ex-partner.

The law states that if all the people pay money into the joint account, it is assumed that they all own the amount jointly (it doesn't matter how much each person pays in). For a married couple or civil partners, it is assumed the money in the account belongs to both people equally, even if only one of them pays into the account. However, if you are not married or civil partners, if one of them isn't paying into the account, it isn't assumed that they are owed any money at all.

At the end of the day, the final decision may rest with taking the issue to court.

### **Contact the issuer of any joint credit cards.**

These are – unlike bank accounts – never actually joint. There is only one primary user, and one secondary user.

- o If you are the primary user, get your partner removed as the secondary user.
- o If you are the secondary user, get your own name removed from the card. This way, any further costs incurred by your partner will no longer be their liability.