



Project Support Services



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Helping you manage your long term relationships within a changing climate

Changes and Challenges

The period from the late 1990s up until today has seen an unprecedented level of long-term commercial partnership agreements, particularly between the public and private sectors. Equally significant has been the breadth of scope of many of these contracts. For example it is common for contracts entered into under the PFI, NHS Lift, BSF and wider public-private partnership programmes to cover design, development, finance, employment, property, maintenance, operational services and statutory compliance all within a single contract that is intended to govern relationships over a period often as long as 30 years.

Inevitably during such prolonged periods, tensions will emerge within these relationships, perhaps resulting in claims, whilst variations will also be needed to meet changing circumstances, shifts in legislation and policy and technological innovation. Against the background of public sector expenditure cuts and the associated reinterpretation of what constitutes best value for money in today's climate, some of the "all singing, all dancing" building and service specifications encapsulated in those contracts governing such public-private partnerships are already coming under scrutiny and challenge.

“The lawyers really care about our business, provide good value for money, and create small dedicated teams with an emphasis on quality.”

Chambers and Partners

Our Team

Devonshires' Project Support Team is extremely well-placed in helping you deal with these challenges. Not only have we worked across virtually all public sector service streams (including leisure, education, key worker accommodation, housing, health, care, "blue light", energy, waste and office accommodation) in the procurement of such projects, but we have also provided numerous "post-contract" services for both public and private sector alike. These have ranged from variations, refinancings, share purchases and property restructuring through to dispute resolution services such as mediation, adjudication, arbitration and litigation.

The Project Support Team pulls together projects expertise from across our core Projects, Employment and Disputes Resolution and Litigation Teams. Within each of these teams, we have specialists who understand the often complex and intricate delivery structures and the complex web of documentation that so often underpin long-term partnership projects.

As a team we work very closely together. Unlike many of our competitors, we are located in the same office and are therefore able to provide you with a comprehensive service from a single location.

Our Approach

Our approach is forthright, innovative, pragmatic and efficient. We will not recommend unnecessarily comprehensive and complex formal deeds of variation where more simplistic and practical mechanisms are available. We are strong advocates of mediation but not afraid to use litigation and we recognise that being able to achieve a solution in an often inflexible long-term contract may mean having to give something away.

We also recognise that costs arising from this type of work are rarely budgeted for and we are happy to discuss creative ways of funding our services where appropriate.

Where you have a potential dispute we will provide you with clear practical advice from the outset, giving you a detailed risk/reward analysis. We will use our commercial expertise to assist you in making the right decisions and you will find that we are not merely advisory lawyers but that we will actively participate on your behalf in getting problems resolved.

We are always mindful of long-term commercial relationships, finding a forum within which disputes can be fully and thoroughly argued out. We are advocates of adjudication and providing quick and effective methods of bringing disputes to a resolution.

If you require advice in relation to project support services we would be delighted to hear from you, whether it is to help you respond to the Government's efficiency agenda, deal with a dispute or help you understand exactly what you can and cannot do under your existing documentation.



Our Services

Typical project support services that we offer include:

- Contract interpretation
- Procurement advice
- Contract variations
- Restructuring of property advice
- Renegotiation
- Pre-dispute advice
- Dispute resolution strategy
- Mediation
- Construction
- Adjudication
- Litigation
- Arbitration
- Refinancing
- Pensions and employment support
- Corporate restructuring
- Share sales and purchases
- Advice on achieving greater efficiencies through existing contract documentation

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