

## **What is collaborative law?**

The collaborative family law process is a relatively new way of dealing with family disputes. Each person appoints their own lawyer but instead of conducting negotiations between you and your partner by letter or phone you meet together to work things out face to face.

Each of you will have your lawyer by your side throughout the entire process and therefore will benefit from legal advice as you go. The aim of collaborative law is to resolve family disputes without going to court.

Collaborative lawyers work with you, your partner and your partner's lawyer, in a series of face to face negotiations, to help you resolve your family disputes.

## **How does the collaborative process work?**

You've both met with your respective lawyers, discussed the different options and processes available and decided that the collaborative process is for you. What can you expect to happen next?

You will both meet individually with your separate lawyers to talk about what to expect in the collaborative meetings which are usually referred to as 'four way' meetings as they are meetings between the four of you - you and your partner and your respective lawyers. You and your lawyer will discuss what you both need to do in order to prepare for the first 'four way' meeting.

Your lawyer and your partner's lawyer will speak to each other either face to face or over the telephone in order to plan for your first meeting.

### **The first four way meeting:**

At the first four way meeting the lawyers will make sure that you both understand that you are making a commitment to working out an agreement without going to court and you will all four sign an agreement to this effect.

You and your partner will be invited to share your own objectives in choosing this process and you will all plan the agenda for the next meeting. This will depend on your own individual circumstances but might typically include a discussion about how the children are responding to the separation.

If time permits you may also go on to discuss how financial information will be shared and agree on who will bring what financial information to the next meeting.

### **Subsequent four way meetings:**

Subsequent meetings will deal with you and your partner's particular priorities and concerns. You might, for instance, look at involving other professionals such as specialists in pensions and financial planning or people trained to assist children in understanding and coping with the changes that your divorce or separation will bring to their lives. The meetings will enable you to reach agreement on how the finances will be shared or what arrangements need to be made for any children.

### **The final meeting:**

In the final meeting documents detailing the agreements you have reached will be signed and your lawyers will talk you through anything else that needs to be done in order to implement those agreements. Sometimes a firm timetable for implementation will not be possible, for instance, if the family house needs to be sold.

**How long does the collaborative process take?**

One of the benefits of the collaborative process is that it is not driven by a timetable imposed by the court. So to a large extent the process can be built around your family's individual timetable and priorities.

If you would like to have an informal chat about the possibility of using collaborative law to resolve a family breakdown, you can either complete the contact me form on our website or telephone collaborative lawyer Lyn Brisley on 01733 888 841.

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