



WHAT IS COLLABORATIVE LAW?

The collaborative process is a different way of resolving the issues surrounding separation and divorce. If you are genuinely interested in a resolution that does not involve the court and if you are committed to dealing with matters through communication rather than confrontation, this may be the right approach for you.

Collaborative law does not involve the court until agreements have been reached and the legal formalities are concluded with the court's approval. Ann Corrigan was one of the very first lawyers in England to train as a collaborative lawyer in 2004 and has substantial experience in this effective, alternative solution that can significantly ease the pain of relationship breakdown.

In a series of face to face consultations – 'four way meetings' – you meet with your collaboratively trained lawyers and at the outset, sign a participation agreement which confirms your intention not to involve the court but to work together in finding solutions to any issues arising out of the breakdown of your relationship. We avoid adopting positions but instead, focus on your needs and interests and, most importantly, on the outcome for you.

All discussions take place at the four way meetings so you are involved throughout the entire process and your lawyers will guide you throughout. Sometimes, you may wish to speak to your solicitor privately during a meeting but usually, any advice given will be shared with your partner and his or her adviser so as to maintain the transparency that is at the heart of the collaborative process.

Throughout the meetings, your lawyers may discuss the law and will explain to you clearly anything you do not understand or needs further explanation to enable you to understand the options available to you.

Sometimes you may be asked to prepare an 'anchor' statement before the first meeting, setting out why you want to resolve your issues in this way, what solutions any financial decisions will affect you and where there are children, how you would like your co-parenting relationship to work in the future. Your solicitor can help you prepare the anchor statement and if the meetings do not always run smoothly, the statement will help to bring you back to why you wanted to use the collaborative process.

If you are interested in exploring the collaborative process, please raise this at your first meeting with us. Your partner will also have to instruct a collaboratively trained solicitor and we can help with this if your partner has not yet taken legal advice.

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