

**What is Collaborative Law?**

Collaborative Law is an alternative dispute resolution method that encourages parties to discuss, negotiate and ultimately agree the aspects of their separation without ever stepping foot in a Courtroom. This is achieved through a series of roundtable meetings where both parties and their respective Collaborative Lawyers set their own agenda and discuss and agree the matters that are important to them, in their own timeframe.

Generally, the costs are less than the traditional Court route, there is less animosity and there is considerably more control of the topics, how they are approached and importantly, how they are resolved. The overall aim should be to reach an agreement that is fair to the whole family (including any children), rather than simply focussing on what each party wants for themselves, as can become the case through the traditional route.

**Can anyone do it?**

The Collaborative process does not require everyone to get along or be amicable, few break ups are like that, but the Collaborative Process does require each party to act openly, honestly, in good faith and with respect for each other. There may be tears, there may be anger, these are normal parts of any process dealing with relationship breakdown and they are not likely to undermine the process, but a failure to disclose relevant information or a lack of respect for the other party will undermine the process, so both parties have to be willing to engage and do so in good faith. If that is the starting point, Collaborative Law can be for everyone.

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of Collaborative Law**

The advantages are numerous. It is generally cheaper, quicker, less acrimonious, more bespoke in terms of the issues and more likely to leave you feeling in control of the outcome. The disadvantages are few, but the main one is that if for some reason the Collaborative Process breaks down, the two Collaborative lawyers are not able to assist their client to issue an application to Court to resolve matters through the traditional route and both parties will have to instruct new lawyers. Fortunately, breakdowns of the Collaborative process are rare.

**How can I find a Collaborative Lawyer?**

Resolution, the organisation that represents Family Lawyers, trains and accredits Collaborative Lawyers and they have a search facility to find a legal professional on their website: [www.resolution.org.uk](http://www.resolution.org.uk). Just enter your postcode and choose 'Collaborative Practitioner' from the drop down options.