



A NEW WAY TO DIVORCE IN NEWCASTLE

COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Valerie Wormald, senior partner was one of the first fully qualified Collaborative Lawyers in the North East. She is committed to the revolutionary new process of reducing the heartache of splitting up.

WHAT IS IT?

A growing number of divorce lawyers up and down the country have become involved in collaboration family law – a movement that aims to reduce the acrimony in a relationship breakdown.

Divorces are traumatic at the best of times and can destroy whatever might be left of failing relationships, turn children against parents and drag on for years using up families' much needed cash.

The process is not easy and involves emotional input and commitment to truly resolve the problems. Even complicated financial affairs can be sorted out in a series of round table meetings where each party has their own collaborative family lawyer.

As a result, the outcome is one which is decided by the parties and not one which is imposed on them either by a lawyer or a judge.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The idea is very simple – you and your solicitor sit round a table with your partner and his or her solicitor in what is known as a 'four way meeting' to sort out finances, childcare and any other important issues without the need to go to court.

Each party, and their solicitors, have to agree at the start not to go to court unless the negotiations break down in which case you have to instruct a new solicitor.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

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Collaborative Law gives the parties the control and the solicitors are there to facilitate and guide the process. Although the parties set the pace, it has been found that it is generally quicker and more cost effective than the traditional court based route.

By retaining control, the parties can raise the issues that are important to them as opposed to those which are considered relevant by a judge. The process can be very empowering and the emotional costs to each party, including the children, reduced. The effect of a traditional divorce on the children can be enormous, especially when it becomes an all out fight.

Research now suggests that it is not the fact of divorcing that affects children but the way in which the couple's personal relationship is brought to an end, together with the quality of their ongoing relationship as parents.

Many people have taken an interest in this alternative process which allows clients to take a more constructive, adult approach to the breakdown of the relationship.

It is difficult to understand why lawyers have not been adopting this approach for years but many are now committed to this new approach and its ability to transform the emotional devastation into a positive new beginning for the separating couple and any children.

EXAMPLE:

Sue and John had complicated affairs to sort out after being married for 14 years.

They resolved the childcare arrangements for their three children.

They sold the family home.

They had six round table meetings.

The process took three months.

It was a painful and emotional process BUT they came out of it able to have a civil relationship with each other, with their dignity intact and with the children's best interests preserved.

The solicitors involved reckoned that the fees were far cheaper than a fully contested divorce, which could have taken up to 18 months to resolve.

More information can be obtained at www.collabfamilylaw.org.uk or by contacting Valerie Wormald on 0191 284 0363

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