



## **COLLABORATIVE FAMILY LAW – THE NON CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH TO DIVORCE & FAMILY LAW**

Collaborative Family Law is a type of dispute resolution for separating and divorcing couples. It can also be used to facilitate a broad range of other family issues, including disputes between parents post-separation and the drawing up of pre and post-marital contracts. Its aim is to provide amicable and practical solutions to family disputes and other personal matters without going to Court. Also, the Collaborative Law process, is usually much quicker and less costly than going to court, for example, traditional divorces can take up to 18 months from beginning to end – with collaborative law it can be dealt with in less than 6 months.

Traditionally when a relationship breaks down, each person will take independent advice from a specialist family lawyer, divorce papers are issued and dates are set for court sessions to thrash out matters such as finance and children custody. If you are unable to reach agreement it is left to the Family Courts to decide on the outcome.

With Collaborative Law, each person appoints their own collaboratively trained lawyer but instead of conducting negotiations between you and your partner by letter or phone (and ultimately court) you and your lawyers all meet together to work things out face to face. Both of you will have your lawyer by your side throughout the process and so you will have their support and legal advice as you go. Before the process can commence you and your lawyer sign an agreement (called the “participation agreement”) that commits you to trying to resolve the issues without going to court and prevents them from representing you in court if the collaborative process breaks down. That means all parties are absolutely committed to finding the best solutions by agreement, rather than through court proceedings.



The meetings, often called four way meetings, will take place usually in your lawyer's offices. Sometimes only a couple of meetings are needed, on other occasions it may be four or five. The agenda followed at these meetings will be set by you and your former partner, the meetings proceed at the pace that you decide and nothing will happen if you do not want it to. Once an agreement is reached your lawyers can put it into effect, if it needs to be made into a Court Order your lawyers can do that for you.

Collaborative Law is helping a great number of people with problems to solve them in a far more constructive and friendly manner. People who use the Collaborative process also find that they are better able to communicate with their former partner in the future which is often helpful if children are involved.

***For more information about Collaborative Law or to speak to one of our collaboratively trained lawyers contact the Family Law Team at Nantes Solicitors:***

***Bridport 01308 422313***

***Dorchester 01305 250100***

***Weymouth 01305 771000***

**[www.nantes.co.uk](http://www.nantes.co.uk)**