

Helping you to get the best solutions – working collaboratively

Working collaboratively is a way in which you can reach solutions by meeting together supported by your own legal adviser/solicitor. This means that you have on the spot support when you discuss matters in a meeting with your ex/former partner. Generally, collaborative meetings mean that you reduce the need for your solicitors to negotiate via correspondence, saving time and money, you remain in control of the decisions and any decisions you make can be recorded into a draft order at the conclusion of your meetings.

Another bonus of working collaboratively is that many solicitors who work collaboratively either work with or as a member of a team of associated professionals. The type of other professionals might include financial advisers/neutrals, family consultants/ coaches, barristers who can provide a neutral evaluation of your situation and arbitrators who can deal with providing a binding outcome if and when you need it.

As part of working collaboratively, your legal advisers/solicitors will help you to design a service which will meet all your needs, ensures that you have the information, advice and support you need, when you need it and that helps you to reach an outcome cost effectively, efficiently and sensitively.

Information about professionals who can be available as part of working collaboratively is set out below.

Financial Neutrals

Financial neutrals can work with you to help you to get a clear understanding of your finances and what might be possible to do in order to maximise your individual financial situation post separation or divorce. They can be particularly helpful when dealing with complex finances or pensions.

Pensions experts

A Pensions expert can provide a detailed report about any pensions you or your former partner might have. These days, pensions and how to make the most of them is a complex matter and pensions can vary a great deal both in terms of the particular scheme managing

them and in value. We will discuss this with you and can advise you when it is important for you to have expert help with your pensions.

Early Neutral Evaluation

Early neutral evaluation involves a qualified professional (often a barrister) assessing your situation and providing you with an assessment or evaluation of how a Court might act when looking at your particular circumstances. Early Neutral Evaluation can be particularly helpful in complex financial matters or where you need to have some kind of indication of what a Court might decide.

Family Consultants and Coaches

Family Consultants and Coaches are therapeutic professionals who provide specialised support to individuals dealing with family separation or divorce. They can help you to think about what is important for you for the future, to support you with the emotional and practical matters either before or during the time you are looking to reach solutions. They can also help with how best to support your children after you have separated and how to build a parenting relationship for the future.

Parenting Co-ordination

If or when you have found it difficult to communicate as parents or when you have an order from the Court about arrangements for your children, it can be difficult to know how best to put it into action. Parenting Co-ordinators help you to move forwards, find ways to communicate together as your children's parents and are on hand to make a decision if you get stuck with arrangements.

Mediation

Mediation is an informal way of reaching proposals together about the future. It involves meeting with your former partner and with a mediator who is trained to help you both look at how you might reach a solution that works for both of you, for your children (if you are parents) and for your future. Mediation is flexible and can be designed in a range of ways to meet your needs. If you have chosen to work collaboratively and you have a particular issue you would like to discuss and agree together before resuming your meetings with your legal advisers/solicitors, (details of arrangements for your children for example), working with a

mediator as part of working collaboratively may be very helpful. Mediators can also be involved directly when working collaboratively, they might be present to manage particularly complex discussions between you, your partner and your legal advisers/solicitors. Your legal adviser/solicitor will help you in being clear about when or if involving a mediator may be helpful.

Family law arbitration

Family Law Arbitrators provide a legally binding decision when you have not been able to reach an outcome on some or all issues as a result of discussions together, or in mediation or from working collaboratively. Arbitrators can help with both money and children matters. You are able to choose the arbitrator you want and the way in which the arbitration will work. Using an arbitrator means that you can bypass delays waiting for Court dates and have control over the choice of professional considering your case. It is very important to understand that a decision made by an arbitrator is legally binding. Arbitration can be a very helpful means of dealing with things that you feel you can't resolve together without someone making a decision and it is possible for you to decide to keep arbitration as an option even if you decide that you might try working collaboratively first, or find that although you've made decisions on most things, there is an outstanding matter you can't resolve without help.

Involving other professionals

What is important is that you get the very best service that helps you to reach an outcome that works. It is possible to tailor who is involved and when they should be involved to ensure that you get the very best advice and support along the way. We can discuss with you when it might be helpful to involve another professional, what they can provide and how they can work as part of overall services to help you reach a solution. Please feel free to ask your solicitor about how other professionals might help you reach the outcome you need.