

Heartbreak with less heartache

Partnership or marriage breakdowns are emotionally upsetting. But the aftermath of separation can be even worse. All too often, divorce proceedings are marred by anger, hostility and bitterness. All of which can be especially harmful when children are involved.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be like this. Stephensions is one of the first firms in the UK to offer a new approach to managing relationship breakdown. In a process called collaborative law, we aim to reduce the time, cost and heartache of getting divorced.

This leaflet tells you more about collaborative law and will help you decide whether it is right for you.



About Stephensions

Stephensions provides legal advice for all aspects of your personal or business life. By understanding your circumstances and keeping the red-tape to ourselves, we focus on efficiently delivering what you need, when you need it. Operating from a number of regional locations, we rank among the top 100 UK law firms and are one of the fastest growing practices in the north west. With over 300 staff, you can trust our specialists to take care of things on your behalf, always putting your best interests first. So, for legal advice and action the way you want it, just turn to Stephensions.



Working together to work it out

Using collaboration to ease the pain of separation

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Introducing collaborative law

If your marriage or relationship has come to an end, you'll have much to sort out. Dividing your house and belongings, and agreeing fair contact with your children will be top of your list of priorities. But with so much at stake, and with emotions running high, you may find the prospect of reaching an amicable agreement with your ex-partner daunting.

That's where a new approach to separation called collaborative law comes in. At Stephenson's, a team of specially trained lawyers offers this alternative way of splitting up and taking the first steps into the future. It's an increasingly popular option with couples wishing to avoid the courts and the war of words that traditionally characterise divorce.

Solutions round the table, rather than in a court

Collaborative law is essentially about working things out through conversation rather than confrontation.

It involves you and your ex-partner working together with your lawyers, rather than through them, as part of a 4-way team. Other experts in areas such as finance and children can also be brought into the process at any time.

With the same goals in mind, your differences are resolved through discussion and by a series of face-to-face meetings rather than being settled in court. Indeed, your lawyers will sign an agreement preventing them from representing you in court if the collaborative process breaks down. This means they are absolutely committed to helping you find the best solutions by agreement rather than through conflict. Collaborative law is a process that leaves you in control. You dictate the agenda, the pace of discussions and the decisions that are made.

Is it for you?

Collaborative law is not the solution for everyone. It's worth considering if you:

- Are seeking to resolve your relationship differences as amicably as possible.
- Wish to avoid going to court with the emotional and financial implications that brings.
- Are concerned about the impact of parental conflict on the welfare of your children.
- Wish to remain in control over the decisions that are made in relation to your finances and childcare.
- Are prepared to enter the process in good faith and an open mind to make it work.

How we can help you

Collaborative law needs specialist lawyers who have been specifically trained in the process and are experienced in working in this new way – as well as having all the other expertise in family law that you would expect.

Stephenson's has one of the largest family teams in the north west, comprising more than 35 dedicated specialists, and is one of the few firms in the UK that has lawyers with expertise in collaborative law.

If you choose the collaborative route, we will work with you and with your ex-partner's lawyer to ensure that the separation process stays balanced, positive and productive at all times.

If you think the collaborative approach may be for you and want to find out more, please contact Karen Atkins on 01942 777777 or email kja@stephensons.co.uk

She will be happy to talk to you and provide further information without obligation.