

# Better TOGETHER



**The North East Collaborative Lawyers POD is a large group of collaborative family lawyers from law firms throughout the North East. The group meets regularly to ensure best practice in collaborative cases, share ideas and develop excellent working relationships within the group, which is to the benefit of all their clients.**

Collaborative law is a refreshing contrast to the stereotypical and, nowadays, rather outdated image of family lawyers – the ‘tough negotiator’ sparring in court with a hostile opponent. Collaborative family law is a way of resolving matters around separation without going to court. It involves the separating couple sitting down around the table with their specially trained collaborative lawyers to work out the best solution for their family. It is a team approach that focuses on reaching an agreement that everyone involved has created and is believed to be the best solution for that family.

At the outset, there is a clear commitment not to go to court. Instead the couple agree to resolve matters within meetings. They both attend together with their lawyers and these are known as four-way meetings – (two clients plus two lawyers) – or five or six way meetings if other professional advisors are involved. All issues are discussed in a respectful and conciliatory way with the support of all the professionals, which results in a true team approach. Often, matters can be resolved in just two or three meetings, depending on the complexity of the issues.

As well as lawyers, the group also has members of their POD (which stands for Practice Organisation and Development) who specialise in other disciplines that are helpful to the collaborative process. For example, independent financial advisors can become involved in the four-way meetings to provide financial advice on an impartial basis to both clients. They can also

help to implement aspects of the financial agreement, thereby providing a seamless service to clients. There are two collaboratively trained barristers in the POD who can be called upon to provide advice as and when necessary.

This POD covers a wide geographical area, stretching from Northumberland right down to Teesside. Wherever you live in the region, you shouldn't be far from a collaborative family lawyer. You can find your nearest collaborative family lawyer on the POD website at [www.collabfamilylawnortheast.co.uk](http://www.collabfamilylawnortheast.co.uk). There is also a voucher to download on the site which entitles you to a free 30 minute meeting with a collaborative family lawyer to discuss the process in more detail.

**‘Collaborative family law is a way of resolving matters around separation without going to court’**

The group is also closely linked with other PODs in the North of England through their membership of CFL North – the group which unites all PODs in the North. For clients this means excellent working relationships with other collaborative family lawyers extending to cities such as Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool. The website [www.cflnorth.co.uk](http://www.cflnorth.co.uk) provides details of all the Northern PODs who are involved in this initiative.

At their regular meetings the group shares knowledge and ideas to ensure all members all work together to deliver an excellent service to clients. Members also develop their collaborative skills through training events, such as the recent workshops led by Andrew Pearce of Prydale Partners. Andrew is a psychotherapist with extensive experience of helping groups work effectively together, and the group has really benefited from his workshops which are designed to help build the trust between lawyers that is so important to the collaborative process.

The POD held their Annual General Meeting in January at Newcastle's City Library, and here you can see them braving the icy wind together in true collaborative style.

