

COLLABORATIVE FAMILY LAW

ITEMS TO COVER AT FIRST LAWYER/CLIENT MEETING

1. Obtain the basic information as to history of the relationship, property pool etc.
2. Ascertain the client's concerns, needs and goals.
3. Broad outline of the legal framework within which we will be operating, namely:
 - 3.1. Parenting matters – explain that at law, decisions regarding arrangements for the children are based on what are in the children's best interests. Run through parental responsibility, shared care, substantial or significant time – other time.
 - 3.2. Property matters – advise as to the legal model that is applied, namely, the four-step process.
 - 3.3. Financial support – explain the broad legal principles applied as far as spousal support is concerned, namely each party's respective capacities and needs.
 - 3.4. Child support – explain the broad formula approach under the Child Support (Assessment) Act and note that there can be grounds for departure.
4. Broad explanation of the collaborative process, specifically noting that we cannot act if the process breaks down and the parties litigate.
5. Explain the benefit of using the collaborative approach is that whilst we work within the framework of the legal model, we put that in the context of each party's reasonable needs and goals.
6. Discussion of what will happen at the first meeting – see Agenda **attached**.
7. Take the client through the Participation Agreement.
8. Take the client through the Ground Rules.
9. Explain they will be given the opportunity to express their goals and objectives at the first meeting and discuss what this might cover. Recommend that they avail themselves of the opportunity to do so and suggest they may like to run through this with you and jot down some points.
10. Outline the costs.
11. Confirm that they understand the broad structure and approach and enquire as to whether they have:
 - 11.1. Any further questions.
 - 11.2. Any concerns about the process.
 - 11.3. Any concerns about their partner.