

Beth Woodward and Andrea Thompson are delegates to national conference of collaborative lawyers

Beth Woodward and Andrea Thompson were delegates recently to a national meeting of collaboratively trained family lawyers. Beth and Andrea are the Liaison Officers for the Milton Keynes and Bedford groups of collaborative lawyers respectively. Delegates from all regions of England, and from Scotland and Northern Ireland were present. Collaborative Law is developing rapidly and the conference was inspiring and challenging in equal measures. Central to the day was the promotion of children's needs on divorce. One quarter (3 million children) in the UK will be involved in their parents' divorce during their childhood. It is estimated that between 80,000 and 150,000 children are involved in parental divorce each year in the UK. Figures relating to children affected by cohabitation breakdown are unknown but may be twice the number involved in separation and divorce. The message was: **When elephants fight, little things get hurt.** Harm to children is not inevitable. Children can cope with short-term disruption in their lives - as long as parents continue to support them. Yet, 80% of young runaways give family problems – family break-up or the arrival of a step-parent, as their reason for running away. Of these around 20,000 children a year are under the age of 11. These are statistics we want to change by adopting a less adversarial approach to family law where possible. Whilst relationship breakdown is a sad fact of day to day life, our collaborative lawyers work with clients providing information and support to help them help their children. The Collaborative Law process plays a vital role in enabling couples to reach financial settlements outside Court that are fair and the best possible outcome for their family.

10 Top Tips for Parents



- **Conflict** is the major cause of unhappiness and poor outcomes for children
- **Children need** reassurance that their parents still love them
- **Children need** reassurance that what has happened is not their fault
- **Children and young people** need information about what is happening in their family – in ways they can understand – and without a blow by blow account or whose fault it is
- **Children don't** want to take sides –don't make them
- **Children benefit** from keeping contact with both parents – and their wider family
- **Children will tell each parent** what they want to hear – opposing views are not uncommon

- **Children can cope** with short-term disruption in their lives – as long as parents continue to support them
- **Children cope best** when they can go easily between their two homes
- **Children need** their parents to make decisions

Most of all – look after yourself so you can look after your children

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If you want to know more about how our collaborative law could help you, please contact us. www.bedscollaborativelaw.co.uk