

THE UK PARENTAL ALIENATION STUDY



2020

A STUDY CONDUCTED BY
GOOD EGG SAFETY CIC



PROTECTING
CHILDREN
MATTERS

UK



Child Arrangement Orders are made by the court to regulate the contact and residence of children of divorce.

In the majority of divorces, the orders are complied with, but in many cases a defaulting parent – that may be the mother or the father – can generally act with impunity.

The courts are slow to respond and reluctant to penalise, sending the damaging message that court orders are optional, not mandatory; that the relationship with the non-resident parent is meaningless, rather than crucial; and that the system is inherently inequitable, rather than robust.

In the worst cases, a non-resident parent, can be denied contact with their child for several years. If they do not have a spare £10,000 to spend on legal fees, they are essentially erased out of their child's life, with no remedy whatsoever.

How can this be humane for a child, and how can it be fair to the parent?

The welfare of the child is paramount – that is an abiding and unassailable principle of family law and children are less likely to experience depression, teenage pregnancy and delinquency when relationships with both parents are safeguarded.

Children struggle to reach their full potential academically, socially and professionally, but the law does not reflect this because of the failure to crack down on intransigent parents, and **because judges and social workers turn a blind eye to parental alienation.**

Family courts make huge and life-changing decisions for parents and children, often on thresholds of proof that are far lower than those required to achieve enforcement, so it is no wonder that the criminal threshold for contempt is rarely met and that judges fail to assert their authority swiftly under the Children Act 1989, or subsequent legislation in 2006 and 2014, and attempts to bolster enforcement have not worked.

Data from the Ministry of Justice reveal that a mere 1.2% of the 4,654 enforcement applications were successful in 2015. Although the letter of the law sets out discretionary penalties for breach, they are rarely applied in practice.

The rise in the number of unfounded allegations of domestic violence as a defence against enforcement is worrying. We need to remove the cloak of secrecy and open up our family courts.

I speak as an objective onlooker moved by stories of injustice, hopelessness and deep sorrow.

I hope the Government will take the opportunity to begin the work of creating a family law system fit for the 21st century.



THE TRUTH...

SIR ANTHONY DOUGLAS, FORMER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF CAFCASS

"Alienation is one type of adult behaviour which causes adverse childhood experiences. At worst, it is emotionally violent. This is why I have suggested that alienation is a form of child abuse. It can have as devastating an impact as physical abuse and can lead directly to child or adolescent mental health problems"

SIR JAMES MUNBY, FORMER HEAD OF THE FAMILY DIVISION

"What is needed, and it is apparent that this is now urgent if the family court is not to suffer further damage to its already gravely diminished standing, is enhanced training for judges at all levels in relation to all aspects – legal, procedural and psychological – of domestic abuse, including, in particular, sexual abuse and parental alienation"

THE HONOURABLE LADY JUSTICE PARKER, HIGH COURT FAMILY DIVISION

"I regard parental manipulation of children, of which I distressingly see an enormous amount, as exceptionally harmful. It distorts the relationship of the child not only with the parent but with the outside world. Children who are suborned into flouting court orders are given extremely damaging messages about the extent to which authority can be disregarded and given the impression that compliance with adult expectations is optional. Parents who obstruct a relationship with the other parent are inflicting untold damage on their children and it is, in my view, about time that professionals truly understood this"

HIS HONOUR STEPHEN WILDBLOOD QC

"Until you address the emotional, psychological or psychiatric difficulties that are leading to this complex dynamic, you're going to get nowhere. Very often, one of my children will get up and say I don't want to go to school. Well just imagine if I say well let us do a wishes and feelings analysis. We do not do that. We tell them to get up and get dressed. So, what is the problem? The problem with Parental Alienation is that it's not about the child at all. It is about the adults. It is about adult issues. It is not child-focused. It is the process by which one parent's emotions dominates a child's relationship with their other parent. It's using children as an instrument of that parent's skewed emotions; it is in every sense wrong"

DR. STANLEY S. CLAWAR, Ph.D., C.C.S. and BRYNNE V. RIVLIN, M.S.S., L.C.S.W., M.S.M.

"The effects of losing not only the intact family, but also a parent, hang heavily over children, touching them in ways that can wreak havoc in many realms of life both in the present and future. As adults, many victims of bitter custody battles who had been permanently removed from a target parent.... still long to be reunited with the lost parent. The loss cannot be undone. Childhood cannot be recaptured. Gone forever is that sense of history, intimacy, lost input of values and morals, self-awareness through knowing one's beginnings, love, contact with extended family, and much more. Virtually no child possesses the ability to protect him or herself against such an undignified and total loss."

THE TRUTH...

DR JENNIFER J. HARMAN, PH.D

"Despite affecting millions of families around the world, parental alienation has been largely unacknowledged or denied by legal and health professionals as a form of family violence. This complex form of aggression entails a parental figure engaging in the long-term use of a variety of aggressive behaviours to harm the relationship between their child and another parental figure, and/or to hurt the other parental figure directly. Like other forms of family violence, parental alienation has serious and negative consequences for family members, yet victims are often blamed for their experience"

DR CRAIG CHILDRESS, Psy.D

"This is a severe form of emotional-psychological domestic violence perpetrated on both the targeted parent and the victimised child. It is the most brutal and savage form of abuse. The pathology is a shared persecutory delusion (ICD-10 F24) created in the child by the pathological parent who is weaponizing the child into the spousal conflict. Creating a delusional disorder in the child that then destroys their attachment bond to their other parent, which is child psychological abuse (DSM-5 V995.51)"

DR CRAIG ELLIOT, PH.D

"Parental alienation is a destructive family pathology. It attributes a quality of evil without cause or foundation to a parent who once nurtured and protected the same child that has now turned against her or him"

DR RICHARD WARSHAK, Psy.D (White House consultant)

"A particularly pernicious expression of inter-parental hostility, when the behaviour of one parent conveys to the child that their other parent is unworthy of the child's love, respect and loyalty"

DR SUE WHITCOMBE, Psychologist and expert witness

"A parent who engages in alienating behaviors has often been triggered by divorce or separation. It can trigger previous life trauma which they have not dealt with. When things are going well, they can manage and don't need to deal with the trauma but when something happens to them – when they feel abandoned or rejected – that can trigger the earlier life trauma and they engage in these behaviours as a safety behaviour to take care of themselves. We see this with both mothers and fathers"

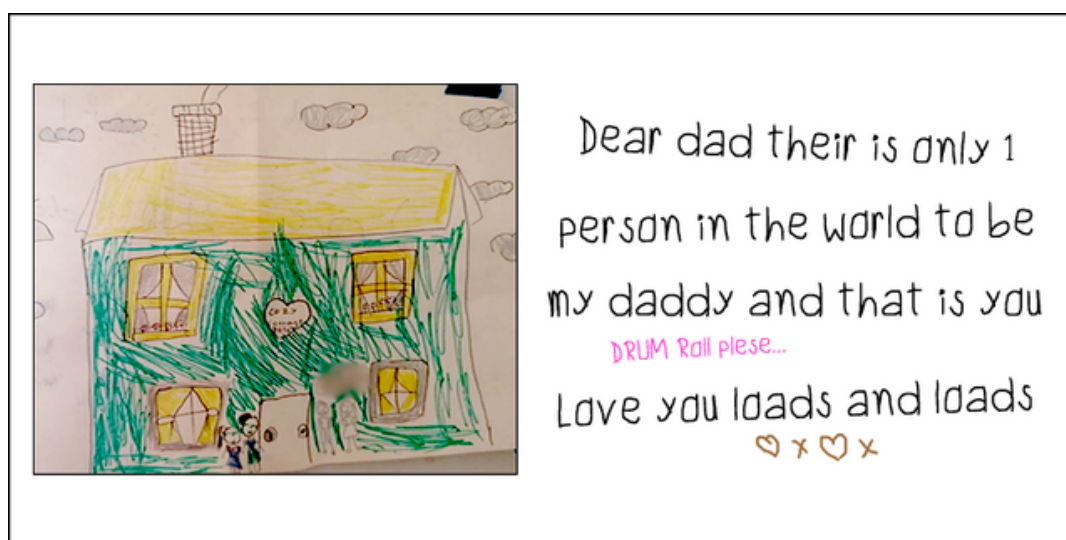
GLENN CARTWRIGHT, Ph.D

"The awful outcome of parental alienation is the complete separation of a child or children from a parent. Even more dreadful is that it is deliberately caused, maliciously done, and entirely preventable. This terrible form of child abuse has long-lasting effects for all concerned"

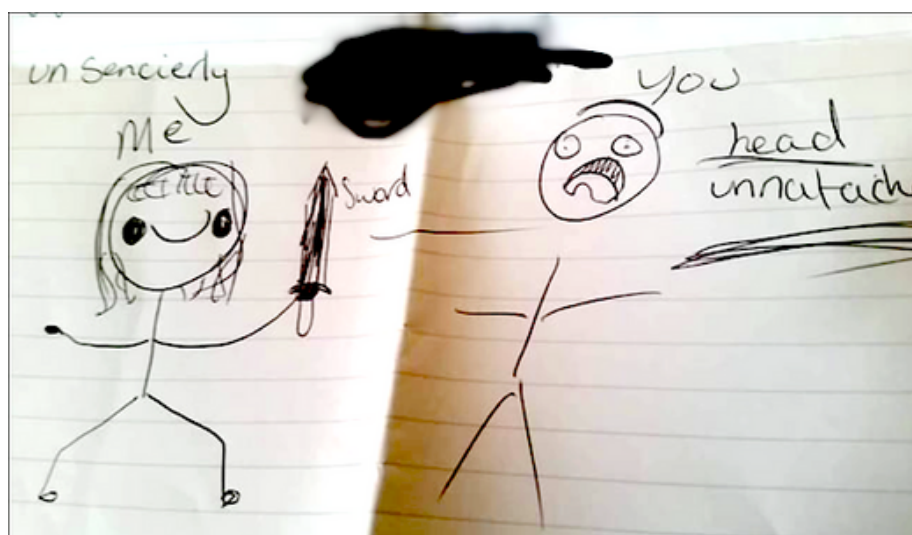
A PICTURE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS...

The destructive impact of parental alienation on a child's impressionable mind can be evidenced not only by unnatural behaviours but also how they choose to express themselves through their drawings.

Pre-parental alienation, this nine year old enjoyed a close loving relationship with both of her parents. The secure-attachment she had, reflected in a typical happy child's picture.



Post-parental alienation, drawn only months after repeated alienating strategies were deployed, following the separation of her parents.



This disturbing image shows her wielding a sword and actually 'decapitating' her previously much-loved non-resident parent. Another showed this parent having their eyes pecked out by crows. Clear signs of extreme emotional disturbance. Yet, in this case, despite 'extreme harm' being identified in psychologist reports, the court ruled she remained with the parent who created the pathology and 'indirect contact' for the safe protective parent.

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We would like to express our gratitude to the many experts in the UK and across the world who freely gave us their valuable time to assist in this research. They represent multi-disciplines including Expert Witnesses in Child Psychiatry, Forensic Clinical Psychology, and Specialist Family Therapy; the legal profession, social work, educational institutions and leading Charities.

We especially want to express our gratitude and admiration for the thousands of victim mothers, fathers, grand-parents, and wider family members who inspired us with their courage and compassion, while facing the biggest challenge of their lives. To protect, love and spend precious time with their children.

This document is for you.



FOREWORD

Good Egg Safety is a national Community Interest Company and a passionate advocate for social justice and community safety.

During the last twenty years, we have worked on a wide range of societal issues, many with a laser focus on protecting children and young people from harm, on behalf of Local Authorities, UK and Scottish Governments.

Only our campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse – a major blight on the very fabric of our society – has equalled the issue outlined within this report, in terms of scale, urgency and priority. Parental alienation itself is a form of domestic abuse.

It is the most extreme form of family violence we have ever encountered.

The deliberate eradication of a safe, loving, affectionately-available mother or father from their own child's life.

This is the largest UK survey into the experiences of target mothers, fathers and wider family. A devastating form of 'family violence' with psychological abuse and coercive control at its heart.

'Parental alienation' has been seriously misrepresented since the same coercive control dynamic of domestic abuse is clearly evident, and yet remains unrecognised.

It denies children their basic human right to be loved, supported and nurtured by both parents and inevitably destroys their victimised parent in the process.

It ultimately damages the innate attachment bond between parent and child which is, systematically eroded and ultimately severed.

The child and parent's basic human right to family life, denied.

The new Domestic Abuse Bill cannot protect victims – especially children – if it fails to include parental alienation within it.

FOREWORD (CONT...)

We have listened carefully to the true "voice" of alienated children – now adults – who had their relationship unjustly severed from one of their parents.

They speak of self-hatred, pervasive guilt, and extreme anxiety **directly** associated with their 'rejection' of a parent.

Rejection actively encouraged, coerced and coached by their alienating parent – usually – although not exclusively, the resident parent.

Many now find it difficult to maintain stable relationships and to trust others. Some finding the cycle of alienation repeating again with their own children.

It is a tragic and wholly avoidable picture.

Parental separation is the most prevalent adverse childhood experience (ACE). Each year in the UK, tens of thousands of families breakdown.

According to the latest report from the Children's Commissioner; **one in eight children** have been diagnosed with at least one mental health disorder.

The separation of their parents the most common adverse life event they identified.

It is a scientifically proven fact that children need secure attachments with both safe parents – if available – in order to live their best lives. To reach their highest potential.

Children's neurological and social development is optimised by growing up with a secure attachment to *both* their parents and wider family, when they are actively nurtured, loved and protected by them.

The attachment system which bonds a child to their parents, does not malfunction without cause. It is an evolutionary primal function which serves to keep children safe from predators.

A child who experiences the sudden or cumulative disruption of a ***previously strong attachment*** with a parent and their wider family, suffers grievously.

There is no worse pathology in the attachment system than the complete severance of a parent-child bond.

The attachment system is **developing its patterns for love and bonding** during childhood. This is the most damaging time attachment pathology can occur.

Gender ideology – despite some concerted and incredibly dishonest efforts to convince us otherwise – cannot change human biology.

A child's greatest fear is abandonment and loss of attachment. Any attempt to distort or destroy it, is psychologically abusive.

This is well evidenced, no matter how much effort is expended in denying its existence.

DSM - 5 995.51 refers to it thus:
"Non accidental verbal or symbolic acts by a child's parent or care-giver that result, or have reasonable potential to result, in significant psychological harm to the child"

Yet in the tragic cases contained within this document, the entire half of childrens' familial heritage has been wiped out, to the extreme detriment of the children and parents involved.

If we are to genuinely protect children and their victim parents from the repetitive psychological and coercive control which typifies this particular form of family violence, it is imperative we speak out and take urgent action to prevent it.

FOREWORD (CONT...)

'Parental alienation' has been dangerously and grossly misrepresented.

We have seen an ever-increasing proliferation of disinformation by partisan, gender-biased researchers.

Repeated narrative which has *some* basis in truth, but which has been distorted and widely amplified. Distortions now accepted as 'truth'

when it is not.

The original truth is that some fathers *may* counter an abuse claim against a genuinely protective mother.

However we see a gross distortion when it is represented as thus:

"Only a means for abusive fathers to continue victimising abused mothers"

This is categorically false. We work alongside thousands of alienated mothers as we do fathers. The latter only more likely to experience alienation because they are less likely to have residence.

Of course, this makes the mere reference of Parental Alienation anathema to many judges and magistrates working in family courts, who have been indoctrinated by this blanket false assertion.

It is inevitable that some fathers will 'play the alienation card' in order to subvert genuine cases of abuse.

As it is equally evident that some mothers are raising false allegations of domestic abuse to counter a genuine allegation of parental alienation.

Sir James Munby, when President of the Family Division, even admitted to it:

"We know that people game the system. The classic example of that is you get Legal Aid if there's an allegation of domestic violence"

In the context of family court and child custody, it should come as no surprise that some parents perjure themselves, since there is absolutely no accountability for doing so.

One such researcher perpetuating the gender myth around parental alienation wrote that when it happens to women it is "*genuine abuse*" and when it happens to fathers, it is 'something different',

which is absurd.

As a survivor of life-threatening abuse myself, it is alarming that false allegations of any kind are raised in order to qualify for legal aid.

They steal vital police time, refuge space and funding from genuine victims.

When the Cameron-Clegg coalition came to power, the western world was standing on a financial precipice. The repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act in 1999 which enabled investment bankers to get their hands on domestic mortgages, was catastrophic. Public funding had to be slashed in order to avoid economic collapse.

Unfortunately, that included legal aid funding. As part of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO), legal aid provision was removed other than for genuine victims of domestic violence, or persons who met 'exceptional circumstances'. This was vital.

FOREWORD (CONT...)

There were many warnings, that in the absence of rigorous checks on allegations *before* legal aid was awarded, false allegations would increase.

That their strategic deployment would be the *only way* litigants could secure funding and the only way many legal firms could maintain their businesses.

Since LASPO was introduced, and despite a declining divorce rate, we have seen these warnings become a reality.

We saw a charity quietly change their status to a 'for profit' commercial enterprise and build a highly lucrative business model on the back of issuing Non-Molestation Orders.

A particular favourite being the 'ex-parte' (without notice) orders.

An investigation into the financial arrangements between this organisation and legal aid lawyers has already seen a legal firm sanctioned by the Solicitors Regulation Authority for breaking the law.

Ex-parte orders which some legal firms continue to deliver late on Friday evenings, so the recipient has little time to respond and contest. It is such common practice, it led to some West Country Judges taking the unusual step of speaking out publicly in concern about it.

All this shouldn't really come as any surprise given we are dealing with human nature and vested interests.

The massive overall cost to our already COVID19 financially drained economy by turning a politically correct blind eye, will be incalculable.

If we are to help genuine victims of abuse, we need to ensure Legal Aid is used ethically and not exploited by those who are gaming the system.

That innocent UK citizens can be served with a non-molestation order without notice and their 'full hearing' within 14 days – part of due process – is often little more than 30 minutes, seems an obvious abuse of what was intended by legislators.

It means that respondents have powerful court orders threatening their liberty, **without the slightest bit of evidence brought forward.**

They find themselves up against lawyers funded by the state, while they have to fully fund any representation themselves.

They often have to wait many months for a proper hearing to contest the allegations and, in the interim, denied all contact with their own children. Some even arrested for sending a birthday card to their own child.

Innocent safe parents plunged into a living nightmare. One that garners scant public recognition, sympathy or support, and made even worse by a victim-blaming culture which assumes they *must* be guilty.

ONS recorded data, confirms a 32% decline between 2005-2019, in domestic abuse, yet we are seeing an explosion in non-mol orders - up by 400%-500% in several family courts.

FOREWORD (CONT...)

Only by ensuring timely judicial decisions based on facts and evidence, using highly trained sub-specialist experts able to identify different patterns of abuse, can we restore confidence and, most importantly, justice in our family courts.

There are tragic implications if we fail to do so. Children, precious and vulnerable, will continue to be used as weapons and ferociously psychologically harmed in the process.

Just as damaged as their target mothers and fathers who are being driven into an emotional vortex **many never recover from** through the inexplicable and sometimes irrevocable loss of their children.

There is no closure for these devastated parents. Only an overwhelming sadness and grief. A complete sense of powerlessness in the midst of a systemically failing family court system, where they are effectively being erased from their own children's lives.

If we choose to ignore parental alienation for political / professional expediency, or because it does not fit the narrative of gender ideology, then we become complicit.

Complicit in the wholesale destruction of safe families, children's futures and our very community.

This is not a 'gender issue', nor ever has been. It is a legislative issue. A mental health issue. A public health issue of scandalous magnitude

History will judge harshly those in positions of power and influence who allow the Domestic Abuse Bill to pass without including this, the most savage form of abuse, other than death, any parent or child could suffer.

The easing of restrictions for COVID19, does not help any of these families. We cannot protect children, until we protect all victims.



Janis James, Chief Executive
Good Egg Safety CIC





PARENTAL ALIENATION IS A FORM OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

According to Women's Aid,
"coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. It is a particularly insidious form of post-separation abuse"

Here is why parental alienation must be included in the new Domestic Abuse Bill.

Those who seek to unjustly sever a child's relationship with one of their parents, engage in many of the following coercive and controlling behaviours:

Repeatedly denigrates, demeans and devalues the other parent in the presence of the child and others. They often insist a child stops calling their parent "mum" or "dad" or even prevents them talking about the other parent. They bad mouth the other parent, criticise their parenting and deny their value to their children.

Isolates the other parent from friends and family. They act as a gatekeeper, preventing children from spending time with the other parent, from talking on the phone, or messaging. They repeatedly break agreed arrangements and court orders.

Causes financial hardship by refusing to communicate or make arrangements other than through solicitors or the family court. They barter child-parenting time, offering to increase time, or threatening to reduce it, depending on money exchanged.

Interferes with parental responsibility – failing to consult on medical or educational issues and relay important health and schooling information. They may unlawfully change a child's name in an effort to eradicate a parent from the child's life and identity.

Makes false allegations of abuse, fitness to parent, substance abuse or mental health difficulties – reporting these to the police or social services – in order to prevent a parent from being with their child.

Interferes with child-parent time by arranging appointments, events and activities. They may continually text or video-call the child or ask the police to make repeated welfare checks.

PARENTAL ALIENATION IS A FORM OF DOMESTIC ABUSE (CONT...)

Destroys or disposes of gifts, mementos, photographs and letters given to children by their target parent, fostering a belief that their other parent is not important *or does not love them*.

Burdens their child with angry or emotional outbursts – crying or appearing fearful or anxious when a child spends time with the other parent. In this way, a child comes to feel responsible for their parent's emotional regulation and stability.

Parental alienation does not resolve itself without judicial intervention.

Behind the behaviours of an alienating parent are often unresolved psychological issues, and children are unable to protect themselves. An alienating parent's behaviour is abusive and the consequences are likely to be longer lasting than other forms of abuse.

Dr Adrienne Barnett wrote the following on 'SAFE', on behalf of Women's Aid:

"The success of the strategy has been to co-opt into the PA lobby mothers who have experienced fathers' undermining of the mother-child relationship as part of a strategy of abuse.

Perpetrators intentionally try to undermine, distort and disrupt this relationship and turn children against their mothers by demeaning, belittling, criticising and insulting women to and in front of children, encouraging children to participate in the abuse of their mothers and treating children to expensive gifts and days out, which can continue to be perpetrated through child contact

The 'alienating' behaviour I would suggest, be called out for what it is – a strategy of domestic abuse."

Please take a few minutes to read the following genuine quotes and see if you can identify whether they are a 'strategy of domestic abuse' against mothers *or* fathers.

"It's horrible to be in this position and nothing can be done about it. My ex-partner was able to manipulate our two kids to lie and said it's 'their choice' not to see me. My youngest was only three. How does he even know he doesn't want to see me?"

"I have a Child Arrangements Order in place. I have followed all directions stipulated in the court order. Their X is playing emotional games by refusing to let me see or speak to her. Changing dates & times to suit. My daughter is sometimes very distant and says things which are out of character for a four-year-old"

"Cafcass, Social Services and the courts have NO idea how to deal with this type of abuse and actually allow the abuse to continue"

"My X put every conceivable obstacle in the way, including psychologically turning her against me"

"Families are being destroyed by this abusive behaviour, and the damage is infinite"

"I strongly feel that my case is coercive manipulation. My son and I had a very strong bond however his X has over a period of years damaged it and manipulated him to the point where he no longer wants to see me"

PARENTAL ALIENATION IS A FORM OF DOMESTIC ABUSE (CONT...)

"It's heart breaking to think of my daughter's childhood being ruined by this"

"My mental health has deteriorated significantly, and it has taken a lot to still be here even with my current family"

"This whole situation has ruined my life. My kids are my world and my reason to wake in the morning. Without them, I am nothing"

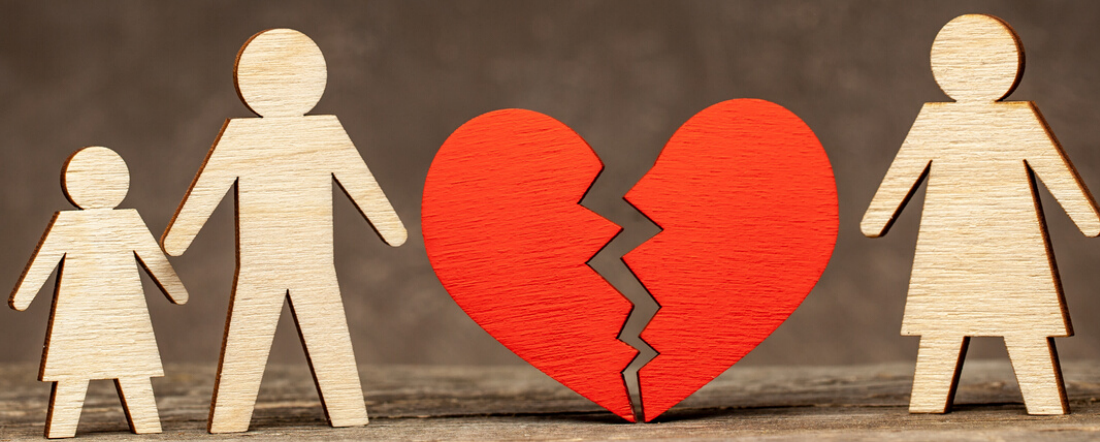
"My son's last words to me three years ago, were on the phone. I'm not going to agree to see you until you sort out the endowment policy payout with X and then he hung up. He was only eleven at the time"

Are you able to discern the difference? Can you tell which statements came from target mothers and which from target fathers?

The fact is, there is no difference. They are all caused by the *exact same* psychologically abusive and controlling behaviour.

If we take gendered ideology out of this equation, these alienated mothers and fathers plight is exactly the same.

Alienating behaviour is indeed a strategy of domestic abuse. As with other forms of abuse, it is NOT a gendered crime.



DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

All truth passes through three stages:

- **First, it is ridiculed.**
- **Secondly, it is violently opposed.**
- **Thirdly, it is accepted as self-evident...**

Without truth, facts and hard evidence, we are building on sand. Without solid foundation. With no means to address any issue which falsehood perpetuates. The root cause remains hidden from view.

The false narrative which positions all men as 'perpetrators' and all women as 'victims' **paradoxically, increases harm.**

It does so, because unless female perpetrators of abuse, get the urgent help and support they need too, then as a society we are unable to address whatever trauma drives their abusive behaviour.

In many respects they, like male abusers, are as much victims as their own victims.

Let's take just one example of hundreds of recent cases of female aggression reported in the media, then forgotten.

A female perpetrator, Ms Lyons, wrote on her Facebook account that if she found the children who knocked on her door and ran away, she would '*slit their throats*'.

Instead, she consoled herself by taking her partner's large BMW and drove it straight into them.

In a victim impact statement, one of the boys said he was still – unsurprisingly – 'battling with anxiety'.

The other said he couldn't get the assailants' angry face and noise of engine out of his head'.

Two young boys mentally traumatised – potentially for life – in addition to weeks spent in hospital recovering from serious physical injuries.

Yet, the perpetrator walked free from court with an admonishment from her defence counsel that she "hadn't covered herself in glory that day".

Can anyone imagine if that crime was reversed and a man deliberately drove his car into two young girls?

How can we help any female perpetrator get the help they need when we refuse to recognise it?

How can we protect their children?

According to Serious Case Reviews (SCR) data between 2009 and 2015, there were 332 culpable child homicides.

NOT 19

The widely circulated report by Women's Aid, '**Child First - 19 Homicides**', referenced ten years of SCR data between 2005-2015 which identified a dozen cases of men killing their children whilst 'on contact'.

It was absolutely right that they brought this to the attention of Government. Each story heart-breaking.

They won Parliamentary time for a debate in the House of Commons in 2016 and 120 MP's rightly supported it.

The report was used to call for the urgent removal of the presumption of 'contact at all costs', for abusive fathers in family courts.

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

It is absolutely right that any abusive parent should require strict supervision in order to continue seeing their children. No-one would argue otherwise.

What was not referenced, however, **were the fifteen children killed by their nine mothers** – two of whom while away on contact from their resident-parent fathers.

No mention either of the Samira Lupidi tragedy where she stabbed her 3 year old and 17 month old little girls to death in a refuge, a few months before publication.

The fact is, SCR data of culpable child homicides shows us that more mothers have killed their children than biological fathers and male partners combined.

The new Domestic Abuse Bill, therefore, cannot protect *all* children until it protects *all* victims – irrespective of gender.

The Duluth model is still widely used in the UK for male perpetrators.

It reiterates a falsehood that all male aggression is done merely for "power, control, and because he can"

Yet the co-author of this model, Ellen Pence, debunked her own theory when she said:

"Somewhere we shifted from understanding violence as rooted in a sense of entitlement to rooted in a desire for power. We created a conceptual framework that did not fit the lived experience of the men and women we were working with"

"We engaged in ideological practices and claimed them to be neutral observations"

If we are serious about protecting vulnerable children and victim parents; we have to remove the gendered lens which has more to do with furthering ideology than protection.

Domestic abuse – "a gendered crime"

The proposition that domestic abuse in the UK is a 'gendered crime' is not supported by scientific evidence.

Our annual crime survey shows us that one third of victims are men.

The UK Statistics Authority has issued two separate warnings that the term 'overwhelmingly female' in relation to abuse victims, is false.

The reason this matters so much is that we simply cannot protect all children until we protect all victims.

Gender bias puts children of female perpetrators at great risk.

How can we fail to protect them because their victim parent is male? It would be morally and ethically indefensible.

This is equally true when we consider the pernicious abuse of parental alienation.

It has been incorrectly re-framed as a 'fathers rights' issue and only as a "backlash against perceived feminist gains".

Which is nonsense.

Further denigrated as a 'debunked theory' concocted by a 'paedophile' (false) rogue psychiatrist.

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

Alienating behaviours have likely been around since the beginning of human civilisation.

Recorded by Louise Despert, a leading French child psychiatrist and psychotherapist in 1953.

"It is a sharp temptation for the parent who remains with the child, to break down their love for the one who has gone. This may be a temporary relief to the parent who does so, but it can only do harm to the child"

Many years before Gardner.

If we are to protect children, we can only refer to facts.

Facts found in a rudimentary knowledge of attachment-based science.

Our evident lack of respect for attachment-based science may help explain why the UK scores less well in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index, in comparison to other countries with healthier parenting and family court models.

It also explains why we refer to precious parenting time as 'contact'.

It explains why some of the less enlightened members of our judiciary sometimes recommend 'indirect contact' - often when an alienating parent has created so much fear and anxiety in the child's mind, they 'refuse' to continue a relationship with a parent they previously loved with all their heart.

There is no such thing as an 'indirect' attachment bond.

The UK is suffering epidemic levels of crime which the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for serious violence, Jackie Sebire, courageously linked to our 'fatherless society'.

Rising knife crime, drug and alcohol addiction, disregard for authority, law and order.

We are witnessing escalating costs of family breakdown which exceeds our national defence budget by a significant margin.

We blame the perpetrator yet give scant consideration to their previous life trauma. Trauma which is almost always the root cause.

Erin Pizzey, the legendary campaigner who dedicated her entire life to protecting victims and children and who opened the first refuge in the world, explains it well;

"This is not a numbers game. The roots of domestic abuse lie within inter-generational family violence and dysfunction"

And that is the truth.

We cannot remain quiet in case it offends ideological sentiments, when our focus should remain centred directly on how we help our future generation to live their best lives.

While the drivers behind the alienation of a child from a safe parent can be complex and rooted, as in all other cases of family abuse, in trans-generational trauma or psychological disorder, the adverse effects on children, cannot be ignored any longer.

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS

We live in a country governed by equality laws. It is surely unacceptable that any organisation or individuals demand equality when it suits, yet be unwilling to support and promote equality when it comes to protecting all victims of abuse.

It is critical that sub-specialist experts are employed at the earliest stages where abuse claims are raised. In any cases of abuse, victims and their children need immediate protection.

Legal Aid must be available to all victims, including those who are having their children deliberately withheld from them. We agree wholeheartedly that 'all victims must be believed'. Ensuring thorough investigation and fact-finding, does not undermine that approach.

It just ensures public funding is used only for those it is intended for. Otherwise, resources may be misused simply to prevent equitable co-parenting plans.

The biggest losers being children who will have their familial inheritance, and all the extra love, care and nurture it offers, stolen from them.





Online Survey



1. OUR SURVEY

This is the largest UK survey sample of its kind exploring the experiences of parents impacted by parental alienation (PA). It generated almost 2,000 completions.

The data presented here relates to the 1,513 respondents **who reside in the UK.**

It ran between May 2019 and remains live with cut off for evaluation in Dec 2019

It sought to explore the experiences of parents and wider family affected.

A definition of PA was provided and respondents self-identified.

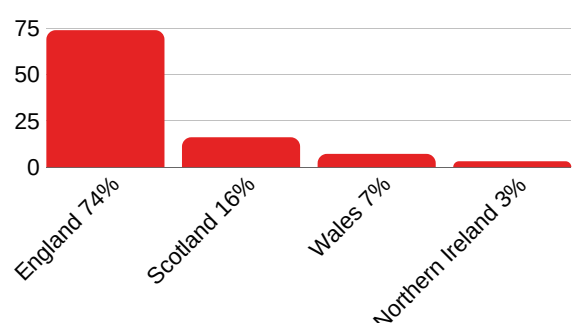
Similar methodology to that used in 'Safe Contact-Saves Lives' report, which is currently informing Government policy decisions on the Domestic Abuse Bill.

The intention was to bring to life the true picture of parental alienation across the UK.

People were invited to take part in the survey through links on the Good Egg Safety Child Seat Facebook page. Initially, to get an idea of responses from 'normal families' who are not in secret groups. It was subsequently shared widely.

PA was a live issue for 79% of UK respondents.

Regional breakdown of the UK respondents



2. KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

The personal illustrations used (in Section 4) to represent the survey findings were selected to appropriately reflect gender and regional location of respondents.

1. Too many children are denied time with their parents and wider family for tragically long periods of time

- 40% of respondents had not had face-to-face direct time with their child for more than one year
- 11% had not spent any direct time with the child in more than five years

2. Alienation has serious long-term consequences for children, parents, grandparents and the wider family

- 60% have experienced alienation for >1 year
- 37% have experienced alienation for >4 years

3. Our current legal and social mechanisms are ineffective at addressing alienation.

- 80% of respondents had health concerns including poor mental health.
- Some respondents disclosed suicidal behaviours and attempts to end their own life
- 21% of respondents had lost a job
- 8% had sold their home to pay for their legal fees
- 55% experienced financial insecurity

4. Alienation appears to affect children more noticeably as they grow older and become easier to manipulate (multiple)

- 91% of children affected were over seven years of age
- 35% were aged thirteen or older

5. Alienation creates a huge burden on the legal system and on parents who are forced to use it

- 69% have applied to/attended court
- 42% have attended court on multiple occasions

6. Court orders are ineffective at addressing alienation, without enforcement

- 58% of respondents reported breaches in court orders
- 34% reported multiple breaches of orders

7. Alienation affects mothers, fathers, new partners and their wider families

- 56% of survey respondents were male; 43% were female
- 20% of respondents were not themselves an alienated parent but were completing it on behalf of a family member.

3. KEY FINDINGS INFOGRAPHIC



Parental Alienation ...the facts

Last time the alienated child had face-to-face contact with their parent

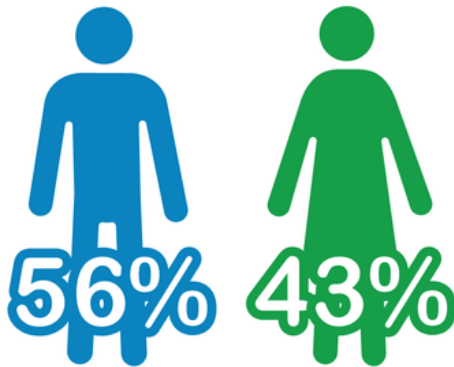
Almost **Half** of our survey respondents have not seen their child for **more than 6 months**



Have had court orders breached



Gender response



1% did not provide gender

Wider Family - Who is affected



64%
currently
experiencing PA
or know someone
that is



20%
partner/family
experienced PA



16%
previously
experienced
PA

Impact on alienated parents



Adverse
health impact
80%



Financial
impact
55%



Stated they
felt suicidal
16



Court orders
breached
58%

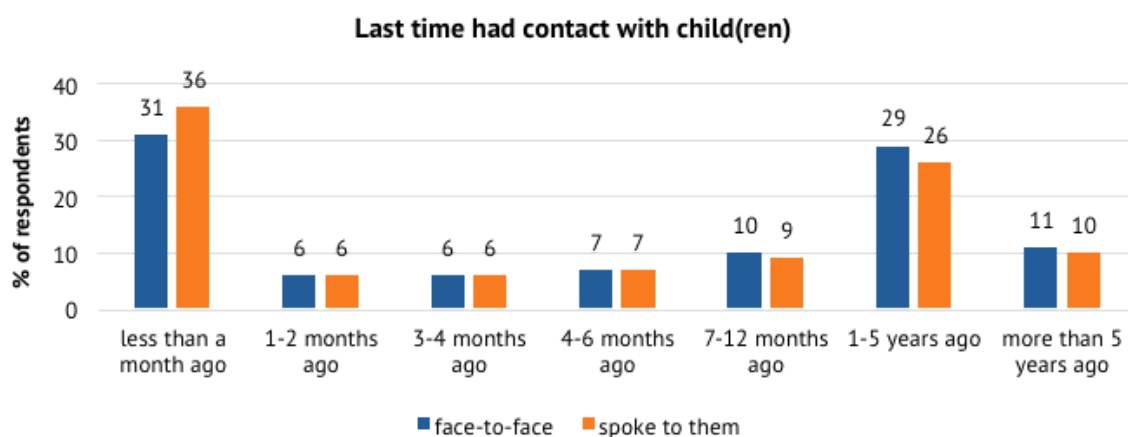
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.1 Impact: Prevalence of contact denial due to parental alienation

Many report that children have been denied substantial amounts of time with one of their own parents, due to parental alienation.

Evidence from survey

- Half of the survey respondents had not had face-to-face contact with their child for more than 6 months
- 40% of survey respondents had not had face-to-face contact with their child for more than 1 year
- 11% had not had face-to-face contact for more than 5 years



Personal testimonies.

I missed out on 6 years of my children's life but believe that they have been psychologically damaged for life [Mother, Wales]

I have not seen my son for 3 years. I have managed to speak to him recently and he has told me it is easier if he doesn't speak to me as he gets so much grief off his mother. [Father, Wales]

The school tell me my daughter has gone downhill now that he has taken her again. If she was ok with him I'd let her go but I can't because I know she's being damaged mentally and emotionally and I'm scared she will self-harm again or kill herself, as she is suicidal. I can't do this anymore. [Mother, England]

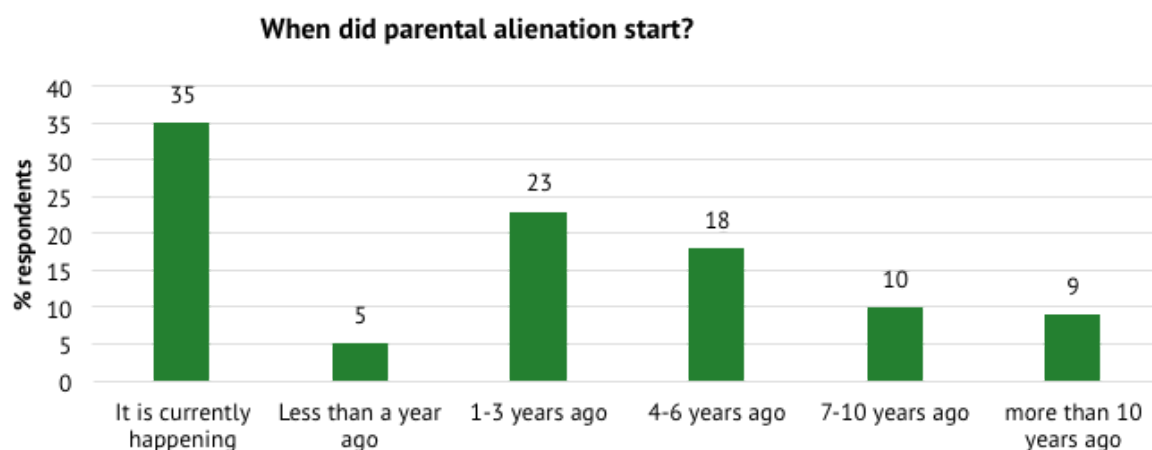
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.2 Impact: Parental alienation persists

Parental alienation affects children and families for long periods of time. Time is critical in alienation cases. From initial 'contact refusal' to complete 'rejection', it can take as little as three months or less.

Evidence from survey

- 60% experienced Parental Alienation for >1 year
- 37% experienced Parental Alienation for >4 year



Personal testimonies.

My son's last words to me 3 years ago were on the phone "I'm not going to agree to see you, until you sort out the endowment policy payout with daddy" & then hung up. [He] was age 11 when he said that.

[Mother, England]

I strongly feel that my case is coercive manipulation. My son and I have a very strong bond however his mother has over a period of years damaged it and manipulated him to the point where he no longer wants to see me.

[Father, England]

No one seems to be bothered I haven't had contact with my children for over 2 and a half years for no fault of my own.
[Father, Wales]

My children are older now but fail to understand the reality of what went on. My daughters have taken the stance of my ex which is based on lies she created to justify what she was doing. My son is older, still in my life but forever feels I am a monster and he is accountable somehow. He clearly has issues with women because of all this. I wish there were something I could do to make it right for him.

[Father, England]

My daughter has been brain washed and thinks I am a bad person. She no longer wishes to have contact with me, she has not seen me for seven years now. I saw her briefly today and was told to go away.

[Father, England]

We have supported our son to maintain contact. He continues to pay maintenance. However he has been denied access for 4yrs. This has had a huge impact on the wider family. The mother has repeated her actions with the father of her other child. Our son made the difficult decision to walk away due to the negative impact it was having on his son.

[Grandmother, Wales]

Evidence from survey

- 1 in 11 have experienced Parental Alienation for >10 years

Personal testimonies.

I had a high court order for unfettered contact breached in 1963 and held my daughter for the first time on the 6th June 2018 when she was 57 years of age.

[Father, England]

My husband is severely alienated from his daughter, mildly alienated from his son. I am also an alienated parent of a 14 year old son, and its ongoing with my youngest son, which has recently progressed from zero contact to minimal contact, but still being interfered with by their father.

[Mother and new partner, England]

My ex partner took my two toddlers after contact - he simply didn't return them, he had no PR. He pretended I had mental health and addiction problems - I did not. He successfully alienated me as a form of control. He had a history of DV and coercive control. He also prevented the grandparents from having contact. He emotionally and physically abused them. Both now adults suffer PTSD as a result. My daughter, who was 2 when he took her, is now back with me, however I haven't seen my son in years, he refuses any contact claiming I abandoned him. They have three younger half sisters whom they missed out on having a relationship with. My daughter said her father would repeatedly say "she's not your mother anymore" and "those wee brats aren't your sisters" - I'm angry no one listened until my daughter was 19 (17 years later!!)

[Mother, Scotland]

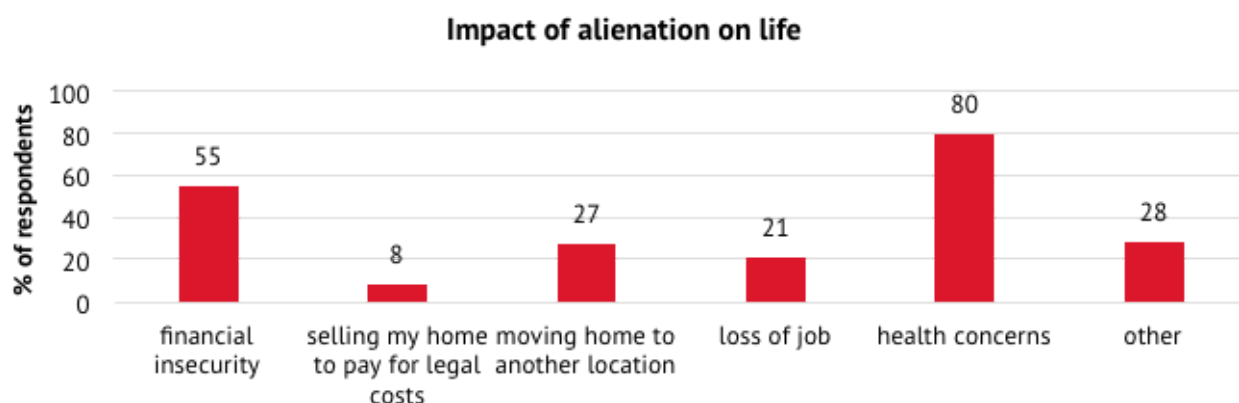
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.3 Impact: Consequences of parental alienation for the alienated parent

Parental alienation has devastatingly serious consequences for the victim parent

Evidence from survey

- 80% have health concerns due to parental alienation, including poor mental health. Some have tragically tried to take their own lives, as a result.



Personal testimonies.

Some respondents told us about their suicidal thoughts and attempts to commit suicide.

My mental health deteriorated significantly and it has taken a lot to still be here even with my current family.

[Father, England]

We co-parented amicably for 7 years and then he got into relationships and they ruined it all. My life is desperate. Mental health can't take it – 2 ambulances last Monday.

[Mother, England]

I just want my kids home where they belong. I can't take anymore.

[Mother, Scotland]

I nearly took my own life, my wife came and stopped me when I was on the edge of a railway bridge. I was severely depressed, I can't believe what I was thinking, I have two younger kids with my wife and it would have ruined their lives too. Parental alienation is real, and is a form of abuse.

[Father, Northern Ireland]

I tried to kill myself several times. As I felt a complete failure, unworthy of my children.

[Mother, Wales]

Evidence from survey

- 21% lost a job, 35% sold or moved house, e.g. to raise funds

Personal testimonies.

The court have allowed contact to be broken but won't admit failure. I can't afford to go on. I am selling my house and moving back to my parents. I had to leave my current job due to the constant allegations. I have been bullied and harassed constantly.

(Father, Wales)



Evidence from survey

- 55% experienced financial insecurity

Personal Illustrations

In the past 14 months, I have spent over £6000 on solicitor's court fees and contact centres. I now can't afford a solicitor anymore so have no legal representation and have only seen my sons for about 16 days in that time. My health has suffered. I have been through counselling and I am in a lot of debt.

[Father, England]

We are struggling to pay legal fees, yet afraid to take it out of court as ex has stopped all contact before. My partner drives 250 miles every week to see his kids. He has no base when he visits them, and as such has to walk around for 8 hours with kids come rain, hail or snow.

[Female partner, England]

8 years of struggle.

29 court hearings.

More than £150,000 in fees.

[Father, England]



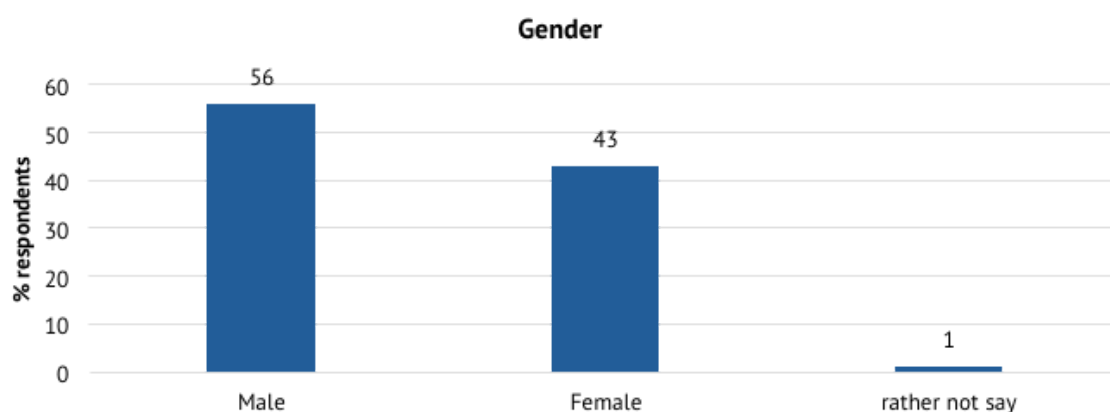
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.4 Message: Parental alienation is not a gender issue

Parental alienation is equally likely to affect women and men given the same circumstances, **It is not a gender issue.** The parent with residence is much more likely to be the offender by taking exclusive 'possession' of the child.

Evidence from survey

- 56% of respondents were male
- 43% of respondents were female



Personal testimonies.

I now can't afford a solicitor anymore. My health suffered and I have been through counselling. I got to speak to my middle son on his birthday but for the whole call of 17 minutes, he was crying his heart out to be with me. I have given a copy of this call to child services and Cafcass yet nothing is done about it.
[Father, England]

Parental Alienation has ruined my life. Social Services made things worse as they said there was no such thing as PA, despite the v995. 51 diagnosis by a court appointed psychologist.

[Mother, England]

This whole situation has ruined my life. My kids are my world and my reason to wake. In the morning without them, I'm nothing.

[Mother, England]

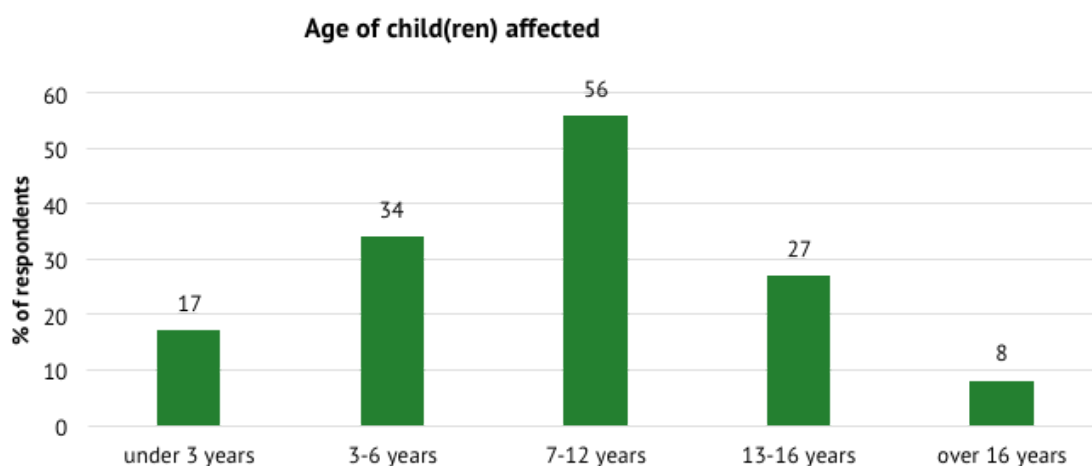
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.5 Impact: Parental alienation affects children of all ages

Parental alienation is more likely to affect older children and young people as they are easier to manipulate into claiming it is 'their choice' to reject a much-loved, safe parent.

Evidence from survey

- 91% of respondents said the children were over 7 years.
- 51% of respondents said the children were under 7 years.



Please note: the question allows respondents to give multiple answers. So a respondent could tick they have an under 3 year old and a 13-16 year old – this is why it adds up to more than 100%

Personal testimonies.

I was married for 30 years and we had 6 children. Please, someone needs to intervene. It's not healthy for my children to be coerced. I look at them in photos and I see the rejection, loss of identity in their mannerisms. I can hardly bear to watch it.
[Father, England]

Evidence from survey

- 35% of children were over 13 years,
- 8% were over 16 years of age

My son will be 16 yrs in October. I have been estranged from him since he was 14. There appears to be no help or support for parents in my situation. Any support you can give me would be gratefully received.
[Mother, England]

4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.6 Impact: Parental alienation affects the wider family

Parental alienation has a large “ripple effect”, impacting other children in the family, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and new partners. It is one of the key indicators to identify alienation when the entire half of the child’s family have been excluded.

Evidence from survey

- A wide range of family members had have their relationships with a child negatively impacted.

Personal testimonies.

We lost our grandson whom we raised from 6 months to 8 years. We love him so much but we can’t even talk to him. She has totally isolated him. It is total torture. This is our retirement. So sad.

[Grandfather, England]

The child was 5 years old when her mother stopped her father from seeing her. We have a huge loving family, including great-grandparents but we have all been cut off dead.

[Grandmother, Wales]

They were also cut off from great-grandparents, their Dad, aunties, nephew, niece, cousins and the children have no idea we are all here.

[Grandmother, England]

I have 4 children who miss their brothers and 1 child who has never even met his brothers.

[Mother, England]



4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

Evidence from survey

- 1 in 5 respondents were not the alienated parent



Personal testimonies.

I am the grandmother but my son has been alienated from his three daughters for around 3 yrs now. From all of us.
[Grandmother, England]

My partner's child lives in England. Court case took place in England. The Judge's refusal to deal with the abuse resulted in the child being so alienated that he was old enough for his views to be considered after 4 years dragged through court.
[Female partner, Scotland]

I'm a social worker with 9 years front line child protection and court experience. What these poor children go through is unforgivable.
[Wife of alienated father, England]

As an alienated step-parent supporting my partner through this difficult time of abuse/alienation, I think it's important to raise as much awareness of this as possible. So many people are abused in this way and there seems to be a serious lack of support/help for people who are in the same situation as us, where you feel helpless... The poor alienated kids, they are innocents in all this hatred.
[Partner of alienated father, Wales]

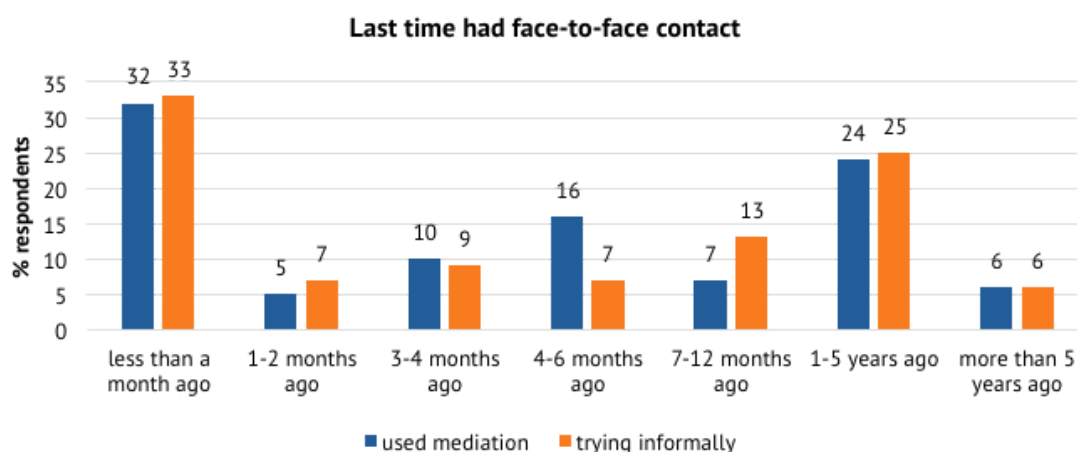
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.7 Message: Mediation is ineffective

Mediation and CAFCASS currently have marginal effects. Evidence shows that alienating parents are highly resistant to mediation and breach agreements as easily as they breach court orders.

Evidence from survey

- Of those who used mediation, 70% had face-to-face contact with their child in last 12 months, versus 69% for those who are currently trying to sort things informally.



Personal testimonies.

Mediation does nothing when you are with a manipulating ex-partner. He even tried to manipulate the mediator.

[Mother, Scotland]

Cafcass did second section 7 report - they saw through the lies and manipulation and agreed it was having a negative effect on my daughter. My daughter's mum failed to show up at court twice.

[Father, England]

My experience of the court system and Cafcass was not a positive one. For my own health I had to stop proceedings and let him win.

[Mother, England]

My husband has been completely let down. After being told by every solicitor, barrister & professional that this was the worst case they had ever seen, nothing was done. We provided constant proof of parental alienation to be told by Cafcass that they could do no more. More broken adults because of a childhood filled with emotional abuse.

[Female partner, England]

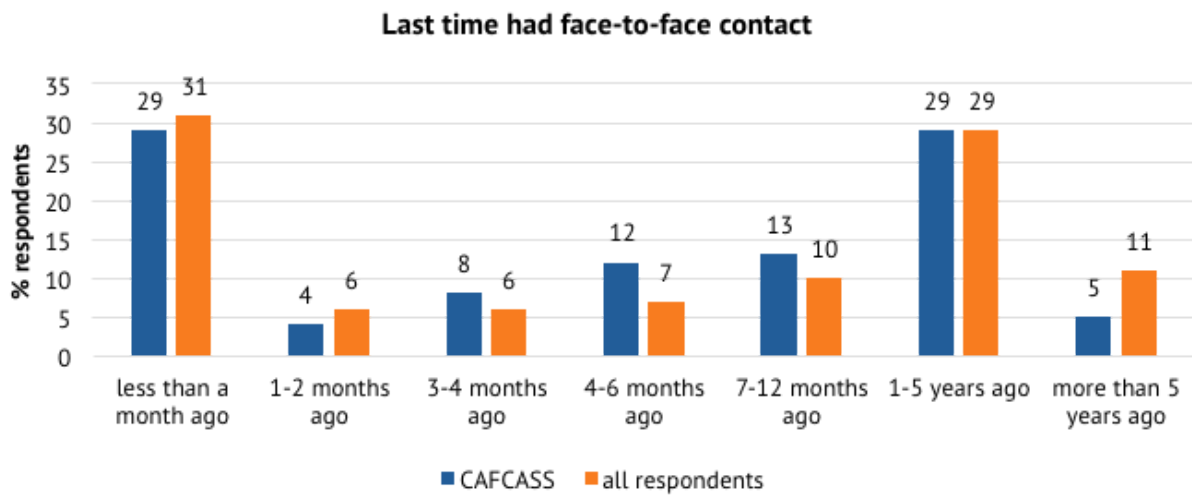
I gave up fighting as it was costing thousands and getting me nowhere. It's my poor children I feel sorry for.

[Father, England]

4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

Evidence from survey

- 41% of those using CAFCASS have seen their child in the last 4 months, versus 43% of all respondents.



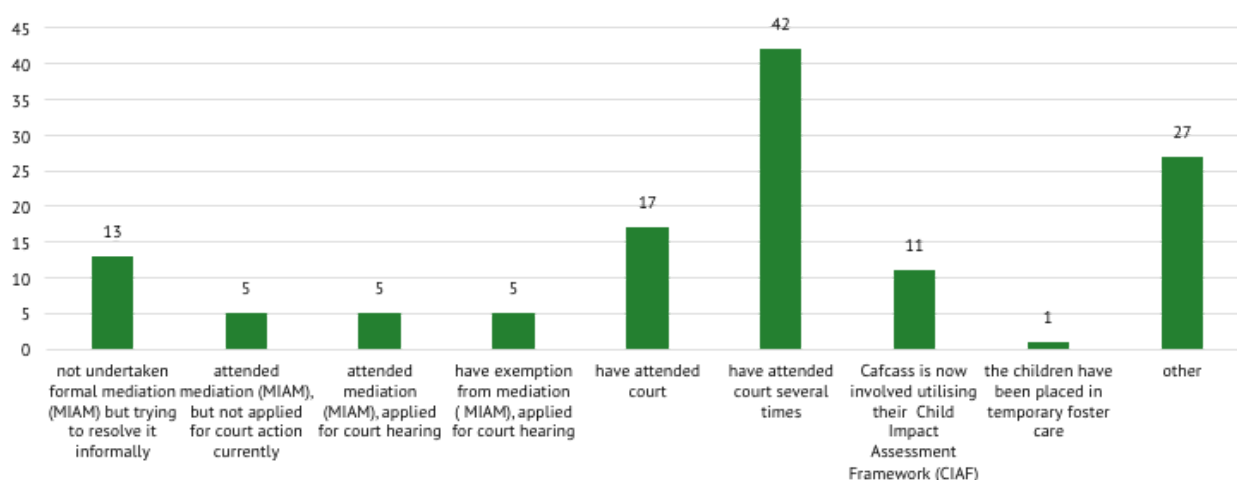
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.8 Message: Parental alienation is a burden on the court process

- Parental alienation creates a huge burden on the legal system and on victim parents who are forced to use it, in order to protect their children.

Evidence from survey

- 69% have applied/attended court at least once, 42% multiple times.
- 11% stated CAFCASS were currently involved with their child.
- 1% stated that the children were placed in temporary foster care.



Personal testimonies.

The only way to help them is to go back to court but my brother has lost faith in the system, has no emotional reserves and has spent several thousands of pounds to end up with 3 emotionally abused children.

[Sister of alienated father, England]

Courts know that the alienator lies, even in light of reports. I demand that something is done. It is child abuse.

[Mother, England]

I have been to court so many times. My case went up to the high court where I have had over 5 separate hearings. The final judgment was good for me but my ex partner still would not comply. I have spent more than £300,000 on legal costs.

[Father, England]

CAFCASS failed to recognise the alienation. Eldest child alienated and has now alienated siblings. I've been outcast and ostracised. The impact on my health has been terrible and this has also impacted the children.

[Mother, England]

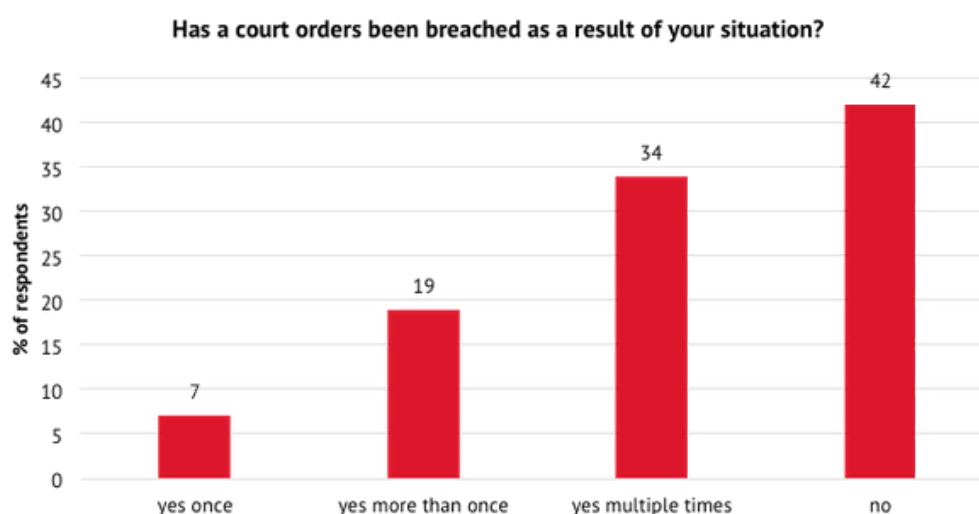
4. KEY IMPACTS OF PARENTAL ALIENATION: EVIDENCE

4.9 Message: Family courts are ineffective.

Court orders are commonly breached with impunity. Less than 1% of C79 Enforcement Orders are actually enforced. Many parents saying their court orders 'are not worth the paper they are written on'.

Evidence from survey

- 58% experienced breaches in court orders



Please note: respondents may have selected more than one 'yes' category giving a higher %.

Personal testimonies.

50+ court dates so far. Approximately £250,000 so far. I still haven't seen my boys in 11 years. My eldest tried to take his life twice.

[Father, Wales]

My ex was found in her psychological assessment to have a "helpless strategy" and is controlling and hyper-anxious. My report came back as clear of any concerns. My daughter appears to be extremely mentally damaged. It's pure tragedy. She was such a happy and friendly girl but is the opposite of that now.

[Father, England]

I'm currently attempting to enforce my order for a 4th time in 5 years. Although I have had 2 Cafcass reports saying I'm a fit and able parent.

[Father, England]

The courts and police especially, were unwilling to help with the situation. They would not enforce the court orders despite having seen them. Social services and CAFCASS were also useless, they washed their hands of the case once the order was issued.

[Father, England]

My ex husband has been in breach of court orders on numerous occasions preventing me having contact with our 14 yr old daughter to the extent that we meet frequently in secret & she sneaks to my home to spend time with me. Far too much pressure on my child.

[Mother, Scotland]



5. CONCLUSIONS

(1) Far too many children are being denied parental involvement for adversely long periods of time (sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.5)

The best outcomes for children are when they have healthy, meaningful relationships with both parents – even when their parents are separated. All children are affected in some way when their parents separate. Most children adjust to a new post-separation family life with the love and support of their parents and wider family.

However, too many children are being denied a loving, supportive relationship with their mum or dad. This is an infringement on the child's right to family life, fostered, on the whole, by one parent. **Children experience lasting grief from the prolonged absence of key attachment figures – not just their parent, but wider family too.**

When alienated, children develop a pathogenic alignment with one parent. This unhealthy relationship is fostered by the behaviours of one parent to satisfy **their own** emotional needs. Alienating parents are not always aware of the impact of their harmful behaviour on their child. Children are manipulated into behaving cruelly towards a parent they love, or made to fear their parent without cause.

Although children of any age can be alienated, children in the age range 7-12 are more susceptible to the alienation process.

Alienated children often experience a life punctuated by conflict, extreme anxiety and distress, until they surrender and 'reject' a safe parent.

In doing so, they are not usually aware of why they are 'rejecting' a nurturing mum or dad; nor are they aware of the consequences.

Sometimes, older children, adolescents and young adults reconnect with their missing parent. This often comes at a high cost. They may feel the need to keep the relationship secret. When they become aware of the lies and deceit, they sometimes cut off the relationship with their alienating parent.

5. CONCLUSIONS CONT...

(2) Alienation has serious consequences for children, parents and the wider family (sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7)

When a child is alienated – prevented from maintaining their attachment to a loving, caring, supportive parent – their life chances are diminished. There are short term *and* long-term consequences to their mental health and ability to form healthy future relationships.

While they may appear, on the surface, to be coping – this comes at a huge detrimental cost – the loss of a loving, safe parent. Children may display anger, withdrawal, aggression, defiance at a far higher level than children who maintain a relationship with both parents. They may experience depression, somatic complaints and sleep disturbance. Some children attack their parents, steal from them, verbally abuse them and destroy their property.



In the short term, an alienated child's immediate developmental needs are impacted. Their ability to develop critical thinking skills is impaired; this impacts on their ability to make rational judgements and weigh up evidence based on facts and personal experience. This impact continues into adolescence and adulthood.

Longer term, young people and adults who were alienated as children are more likely to experience depressive disorders and psychiatric conditions, substance misuse and difficulty forming and maintaining healthy relationships.



Failure to address parental alienation leads to significant health and well-being issues for the parents and families affected. Both mothers and fathers are impacted by the dysfunctional relationship dynamic of psychological abuse and coercive control which is at the heart of it. It is *not* a gender specific issue.

The impact on lives is significant, with seriously impaired emotional well-being, poorer physical health and financial instability. There is often an overwhelming sense of helplessness. Suicidal thoughts and behaviours are tragically not uncommon. Alienated parents can experience enduring, life-long effects. This in turn creates a societal and economic burden.

(3) The current legal and social processes/mechanisms are ineffective at addressing alienation (sections 4.8, 4.9, 4.10)

Parental alienation does not resolve itself without intervention. To expect it to, is highly inappropriate as it usually increases harm to the child. **It places an intolerable burden on the child themselves to act, when they do not have the capacity or freedom to do so.**

5. CONCLUSIONS CONT...

According to the annual CAFCASS report 2018-2019 – they worked with 133,850 children. An increase of 5% on the previous year.

Family Court Advisors (FCAs) have a statutory duty of care to protect children from harm, so in fulfilling this duty, it is essential they are competent to do so.

Their determinations play a vital role in returning stable attachments to a child's life and preventing ongoing exposure to the influence of harmful parental behaviour.

CAFCASS introduced its Child Impact Assessment Framework (CIAF) in 2017, to help FCAs identify whether a child was suddenly rejecting a parent due to alienation, (unjustified rejection) or because of other abuse (justifiable estrangement)

It's vital to know the difference. Otherwise they may leave the child with a psychologically abusive parent in one scenario or encourage 'contact' with an abusive parent in the other scenario.

In either case, a child's future safety and well-being is literally on the line

The Framework was introduced in 2017 by the organisation's Chief Executive, Sir Anthony Douglas who stated:

"Parental alienation is a public health issue. Early help is crucial"

According to a Freedom of Information report conducted later that same year; less than 2% of Family Court Advisors had undertaken Sir Anthony's parental alienation training webinar.

When questioned at a filmed conference, he explained they had been 'too busy' working with families'.

Sir Anthony stated categorically that all Cafcass Family Court Advisors would be 'mandated' to undertake this vital training.

Fast forward to February 2020 and a new Freedom of Information request reveals that almost four in ten (39%) of Family Court Advisors have yet to complete critical training on parental alienation.

This means that there are hundreds of FCAs working on behalf of Family Courts, who do not fully comprehend how damaging and counter-intuitive parental alienation is.

Many leading child psychologists have viewed Section 7 reports which have refuted findings of alienation – despite significant evidence to the contrary.

We have to question how it is possible to make a credible determination – one that can seriously affect a child's future – if, as in some cases, it is clear that some FCAs do not actually believe in parental alienation.

They do not accept the publicly stated policy of their own CEO. In any private organisation, such a scenario would be unthinkable. Those who do not follow their CEO's lead would be forced to comply or shown the door.

There is minimal, if any, follow up to legitimate complaints. No subsequent measurement of the validity of their decisions. They close the case file and move on.

The problem is the alienated child cannot 'move on'. They remain a psychological hostage to the alienating parent and years of their childhood is effectively stolen from their other safe parent and wider family.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Behind the behaviours of an alienating parent are often unresolved psychological issues, trauma or abuse. They have a fear of, and are triggered by, abandonment and rejection. Children are usually unable to act against a parent who is so troubled. They are usually acutely attuned to that parent's emotional expression and needs. They feel responsible for their mother or father's emotional state. They fear their parent's sadness, distress, displeasure or anger, and behave in a way that minimises this. Ultimately, they fear the withdrawal of love from this parent.

Early intervention is essential. The focus of any intervention is to quickly reunite the child with their rejected parent and to help the alienating parent resolve their underlying psychological distress. However, this is rarely addressed within the current system in the UK.

The length of time since the child has last seen their 'rejected' parent is critical. Separation of parent and child is fostered by repeated frustration of child arrangements, including serial breaches of court orders.

False allegations of domestic abuse and child abuse also feature, disrupting parent-child time while safeguarding investigations are undertaken.

Many parents in the UK have lost faith in the socio-legal mechanisms intended to support them. The systems in place do not adequately reflect the complexities and dynamics that exist in PA. In England and Wales, there is a requirement to explore mediation prior to applying to the court. However, mediation is usually ineffective when there are unresolved psychological issues for one parent.

These tragic cases demand robust and timely judicial management.

Many parents invest tens or even hundreds of thousands of pounds in trying to exercise their parental responsibilities and protect their children.

Current processes, costs and timescales of the family court do not meet the needs of alienated children. Enforcement for non-compliance is virtually non-existent and breeds complacency on the part of those supposed to comply with court orders.

The risk of serious psychological harm to children does not appear to be well considered in decisions around order compliance and enforcement.

Parental alienation cannot be allowed to continue, not least because our courts are currently seriously failing in their statutory duty. To address the issue effectively we urgently need:

(i) Inclusion of Parental Alienation in the new Domestic Abuse Bill

(ii) Early diagnosis of alienation when referenced in a private law court application

(iii) Qualified and experienced sub-specialists in the field of parental alienation and other forms of abuse who can identify the difference between alienation (unjustified rejection) and estrangement (justified rejection)

(iv) Court orders enforced first time.

(v) Those who bring false allegations of any kind of abuse, held accountable.

We need to see a willingness by the courts to act upon alienation with the same resolve to protect the child as with any other form of child abuse.



Parental alienation is psychological abuse and coercive control = Domestic abuse

Coercive control and emotional abuse are consistent features found in parental alienation, and perpetrated by both mothers and fathers. It is not, nor ever has been, a 'gender issue'.

The long-term damage caused by emotional abuse is increasingly recognised. Victims often highlight this aspect as the most damaging. Unseen yet deadly. A weapon which, when repeatedly deployed, can wear the victim down, making them question themselves, their capabilities, their worth and sometimes their very sanity.

It is accepted that **any form** of family violence is unacceptable and can never be tolerated by a compassionate and just society. That children within abusive households must also be protected from repeated conflict and chaos, in whatever form it manifests.

The Serious Crime Act 2015 makes behaviour that is 'controlling or coercive' towards another person in an intimate or family relationship, punishable by a prison sentence of up to five years. In Scotland, the new Coercive Control Bill, includes former partners. An enlightened inclusion.

In domestic abuse cases, where psychological abuse and coercive control are at the heart, there is always a pattern, which makes it easy to identify. It is never a 'one off'.

In parental alienation cases – which is a form of domestic abuse – there is *always* a pattern. Victim mothers or fathers who have had their much-loved children ripped from their lives, report the exact same behaviours. The texts and communications they receive, and the behaviours they observe are interchangeable by name.

Many report turning up for arranged collection and their children are somewhere else entirely. One parent drove a round trip of 500 miles before being advised they had 'gone away'. Perfectly timed for when they were parked outside the house, for maximum impact.

Or suddenly their child is 'sick' and kept off school on scheduled collection days, when they were fine before and well recovered the day after. Or the special trips that were fun and full of laughter which get ruined the instant they are dropped off because the victim parent had committed the cardinal sin of feeding them beans on toast for tea.

Instant unpleasant drama which destroy happy childhood memories and create further anguish.

These repeated behaviours need to be seen for what they are – as part of a 'coercive control' pattern which seeks to disrupt a child's innate biological attachment-bond with a much-loved, safe parent.



The list of reasons given for preventing precious parenting time are recognised by all victimised parents because they follow the exact same pattern.

Alienating parents could be referencing the same script, in order to wreak destruction on the minds, health and sanity of their ex-partner. The victim mother or father – a safe, loving, normal range and affectionately available parent – is plunged into a living nightmare. One that garners scant public recognition, sympathy or support.

They walk on egg shells, wondering when something entirely innocuous, will again be pounced upon, distorted and amplified in order to 'prove' to their child that they do not really care about them. Do not love them. Are a 'danger' to them. Alienating parents instil false memories, which hurt their child.

They infer, time and again, that the victim parent is incapable of providing the level of care and understanding that they, the 'protective' parent always displays. Anything, in fact, which serves to undermine their co-parent.

Victim parents become exhausted trying to second guess the next drama, which, as with any victim of abuse, they know with absolute certainty will occur again.

The abuse that is referred to as parental alienation, is never just one event. It is effectively 'death by a thousand cuts'. Repeated, harmful behaviours which to the untrained eye are often not seen by bystanders, educationalists nor, alarmingly, understood by many with a statutory job to prevent child harm.

There are some who suggest that until the point of cognitive dissonance where the child completely kills off their attachment to a safe parent, that it is not parental alienation.

We disagree.

Parental alienation, like all other forms of domestic abuse, is on a spectrum. A child's innate biological attachment bond doesn't become distorted and ultimately severed overnight. Domestic abuse is not just recognised and acted upon once the victim is killed. The abusive patterns are present in the build up.

As with parental alienation, the patterns are there before the precious parent-child attachment bond has been severed (i.e their relationship has been killed off).

Victim parents watch, powerless and terrified as their close attachment with their child is systematically eroded, distorted and destroyed.



These repeated behaviours need to be seen as part of a 'coercive control' pattern which seeks to disrupt a child's innate attachment with a much-loved, safe parent.

Alienating parents:

- **Insist the child is able to think for themselves**, that the child is allowed their own voice and that they “know their own mind”.
- State that “of course he/she must have a relationship” with their other parent, **yet their actions do not reflect their words**, and no proactive and progressive management towards an equitable relationship with the other parent is ever apparent.
- **Will say that “these are my child’s own wishes and I can’t do anything”**; deflecting all responsibility to their children.
- **Allow, and tacitly encourage their child to dismiss or treat cruelly** their other parent and wider family without punishment/correction, in a way that would never be tolerated with the alienating parent’s own family.
- **Will suggest they and their family are “doing all we can”** to reunify the child/children and parent. Yet, they are reluctant to engage with professionals who may resolve it.
- **Say they can’t ‘force a child to go’ or ‘do something against their will’**, yet they never let the child miss homework, or other things the child might resist – the child avoiding their other parent is the only thing they are ever allowed to do.
- **Can be disproportionately anxious or fearful for the child**, and suggest the other parent is a risk to them. They may exaggerate health or other issues. They act in an overly controlling way towards the children.
- **Talk about “us” rather than “I” or “the children”, integrating themselves with the child/children.** They fail to talk about the child as an authentic individual with independence from themselves.
- **May suggest the victim parent is harassing “us” by asking for parenting time** too quickly and should go away, slow down, and wait until the children are ready, which never happens in reality, without a mandated court order which actually carries consequences.
- **May infer the non-resident parent is insensitive to the child for wanting to see them** and ‘no longer understands’ the child, because so much has changed that they have missed.



Our family courts do not protect victim parents or their child, because they fail to enforce the orders, they themselves have written in the child's 'best interests'.

Family courts charge £215 for C79 Enforcement Orders yet less than 1% of these are actually enforced, rendering the existing order worthless.

If the Ministry of Justice was a private corporation selling a service – in this instance an enforced order – and failed in 99% of all cases, Trading Standards would have shut it down years ago.

Section 7 reports may be instructed, which give victims hope of a resolution, only to be let down again by untrained Family Court Advisors who take the child's presentation at face-value, because they do not understand or recognise the counter-intuitive child presentation.

They disregard adult language expressed in their short interviews as 'evidence' that the child genuinely does not wish to see their parent again. Or that the child only wishes to do so on their terms.

In alienation cases, it is never their 'voice' nor their 'terms'. The 'expressed wishes' of an alienated child, are inevitably the expressed wishes of their alienating parent.

Section 7 reports where a child is adamant they do not wish to see their mother or father because they 'tell too many lies' or they 'do not pay the other parent sufficient money' should immediately flag up concerns. One child told the Child Psychologist appointed in their case that she didn't need to see her other parent because she had 'human rights under UNCRC legislation.' She was eight years old.

The Childrens Act 1989, made specific provision for this with the inclusion of 'ascertainable feelings'. So a child's genuine wishes could be uncovered and 'best interests', served. The only way to do this is **to see them with their other parent**. Many child psychologists state that when that occurs, it is often impossible to distinguish the child's behaviour between either parent. Even those who only a few minutes previously were vehement in their opposition to contact.

Adults who were alienated as children tell us they are angry that social workers had not taken the time to build up their confidence in them, so they could speak the truth without fear of repercussion.

The problem is there is 'no time'. The annual report's from CAFCASS, show a 43% increase in cases going through the family courts since 2012. It is not surprising, therefore, many Family Court Advisors are struggling to keep up with their work load.

If Child Arrangement Orders were enforced first time, it is virtually guaranteed that their caseloads would reduce substantially, leaving valuable time for the more challenging cases.



The '**Voice of the child**' puts inordinate demands on the young shoulders of alienated children because they are burdened by loyalty conflict and terrified of losing the love and care of their primary care-giver. It is astounding this is not recognised.

Children simply do not have the cognitive abilities to theorize what it would be like to have a loving parent eradicated from their lives. They are unable to discriminate what is rational and truthful amidst malicious, or fabricated, information.

Most importantly of all, they **do not have the emotional and cognitive abilities** to evaluate for themselves what is in their best interests. Nor do they have the emotional wherewithal to contradict the alienating parent whom they may be completely dependent upon.

Good Egg Safety teaches safer driving programmes for learner and novice drivers in schools, colleges and large corporate organisations. These programmes are designed to help them recognise their increased vulnerability on the roads. Drivers aged 17-25 are at the highest risk and they are significantly over-represented in the casualty figures.

We help them understand that the pre-frontal cortex is not fully developed until the age of twenty five. This critical part of the brain, which is responsible for 'executive function', includes the ability to recognise consequences.

Yet we are asking children under the age of sixteen – some as young as eight – to make **consequential executive decisions** which will have a life-time impact on them.

Given a genuine choice, children always want and need both parents.

Mental health professionals who are assessing, diagnosing and treating alienation – often caused by the trans-generational transmission of complex trauma suffered by an alienating parent – must be competent to do so.

As with all forms of domestic abuse, parental alienation can range from mild to severe. It is based on a spectrum. It is always the intention of parental alienation practitioners to maintain the child's relationship with both their parents, wherever possible.

Transfer of residence is only the very last resort – when it is clear that the psychopathology of the alienating parent is so severe, that to leave them within an abusive environment, would cause the child extreme ongoing harm.

The intention is always firstly to mitigate aberrant parental behaviours in order to remove the extreme loyalty binds children are placed in – where they are forced to 'choose' which parent to love.



In her book – **Breaking the Ties that Bind** – Dr Amy Baker studied the outcomes for 40 adults in the US who identified they had been manipulated to reject one of their parents in childhood. She found that they experienced:

- **Low self-esteem.** Stemming from the denigration of the targeted parent. When a parent bad-mouths someone who is half of the child's identity, the child **internalises this as criticism against themselves** (65%).
- **Guilt.** For having betrayed the targeted parent (% not documented).
- **Depression.** For the irreplaceable time they lost with the targeted parent, extended family members and friends (28%).
- **Lack of trust.** In themselves and others. When they realise that what they believed about the alienating parent was actually not the case. Therefore, they do not trust themselves to be good judges of other's motives and character (40%).
- **Drug and alcohol problems.** Adult children were drawn to substance abuse to escape the pain of their loss (35%).
- **Alienation from their own children.** They subconsciously chose partners who were like their alienating parents and so brought about alienation in their own children (50%).
- **Divorce.** Many said their marriages failed because of their lack of trust in their partner, their inability to be intimate and problems with depression and substance abuse (57.5%).

Effects on children

Young children who are manipulated to cut off all ties with a parent may experience:

- Feelings of extreme pressure to reject a parent and extended family members that they love.
- Anxiety
- Strong anger for the once much-loved parent. When this is allowed to develop it can spill over to other authority figures such as teachers or the police, leading to exclusion from school or a criminal record.
- Guilt for rejecting their parent and treating them with hostility.
- Psychological harm.
- Those severely affected may adopt “splitting”. One parent is seen as all good, the other all bad. They are unable to manage the reality that there is good and bad in both. This has implications for all future relationships.
- Sadness because, deep down, they want a relationship with their parent.
- Suppressed and repressed memories of time spent with the rejected parent.
- Sleeplessness
- Agitation
- Inability to think critically or to describe their emotions.
- Lack of focus.
- Loss of ability to play and learn.
- A restriction on personal relationships with half of their family, identity and cultural background.

Links with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

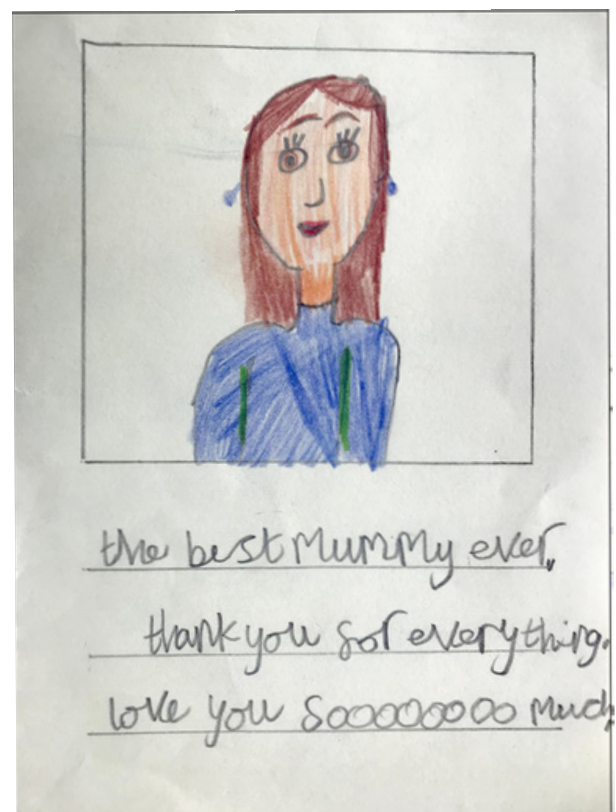
The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention within the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services has studied the impact of traumatic childhood experiences on a child's mental health and future prospects.

The more dysfunctional the child's household environment is, the greater the number of ACES and the poorer their prospects are.

Children who are manipulated to emotionally cutoff from a normal-range parent may experience at least three ACES:

- A biological parent was lost to them through divorce or separation
- They may live with someone who is depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal and
- Emotional abuse

The more ACES experienced as a child, the increased likelihood of developing damaging behaviours in adulthood such as drug addiction, teen pregnancy, contracting a sexually transmitted disease, being obese, alcohol dependency, smoking and perpetrating violent behaviour.





Reproduced with kind permission from Christina, an alienated mother...

Today my daughter turns 13.

Today, I won't see my daughter. Again. Another year, another birthday missed.

Today, a little girl in silent crisis will be forgotten, neglected and tossed aside by someone who should be her hero.

She will reminisce of the times she could run free, speak freely and be genuinely confident in all that she is.

She will think of the bright, neon pink shoes she really wants but is too afraid to come out of the torture of her silent struggle to just be herself...and wear those shoes like the little girl she used to be, would.

Today, a little girl becomes a teenager yet has been forced to feel like an adult for years.

Today, a little girl dies a little more inside on what should be one of the happiest days in her memories.

Today, a mother cries for the loss of a child that is still alive.

Parents, think twice before using your children as weapons in acrimonious break-ups. It does not matter how angry you are. It does not matter how much you want revenge.

DON'T USE YOUR KIDS TO GET IT

It may feel like you have won, but you have lost everything. You lost a child's innocence and that child will never be the same again.

Today, think twice. Think about a little girl slowly dying inside, losing herself more and more as the days go by. My little girl.

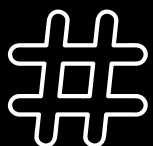
And do not make the same mistake her father did.

Children need both parents...





- 1 - [Suella Braverman MP – Family Justice Reform Bill 2017](#)
- 2 - [Sir Anthony Douglas – FCAs are 'too busy' to undertake Parental Alienation training](#)
- 3 - [The Crisis In Private Law – Sir James Munby](#)
- 4 - [Lady Justice Parker on the damage parental alienation can cause in Re H \(children\) 2013](#)
- 5 - [His Honour Stephen Wildblood QC and Senior Family Court Judge](#)
- 6 - [Dr Jennifer Harman – PA Behaviours: An Unacknowledged Form of Family Violence](#)
- 7 - [Dr Craig Childress](#)
- 8 - [Dr Craig Elliot](#)
- 9 - [Dr Richard Warshak](#)
- 10 - [Dr Sue Whitcombe](#)
- 11 - [Alienated girl](#)
- 12 - [Alienated boy](#)
- 13 - [Childrens Commissioner's Report – one in eight children now have a mental health disorder.](#)
- 14 - [DSM-5 995.51](#)
- 15 - [Gender-biased distortions of parental alienation – Dr Adrienne Barnett](#)
- 16 - [National Police Chief's Lead for Serious Crime – Jackie Sebire – links rise in serious crime](#)
- 17 - [LASPO 2012 – Qualification for Legal Aid](#)
- 18 - [False Allegations – Case Study 1](#)
- 19 - [False Allegations – Case Study 2](#)
- 20 - [National firm at the centre of BuzzFeed investigation](#)
- 21 - [ONS data – 32% reduction in domestic abuse cases between 2005-2019](#)
- 22 - [Expert Witness on the Effect of Parental Alienation on Parents](#)
- 23 - [Dr Adrienne Barnett – Article for SAFE](#)
- 24 - [Quotes from alienated parents and wider family – Good Egg Safety Parental Alienation Report](#)
- 25 - [Female perpetrators walk free from court – an example](#)
- 26 - [332 Culpable child homicides – Serious Case Reviews 2009-2015](#)
- 27 - [Ellen Pence – debunks her own theory on the widely used 'Power and Control' model](#)
- 28 - [Louise Despert – leading French Child Psychiatrist and psychotherapist](#)
- 29 - [OECD Better Life Index](#)
- 30 - [Erin Pizzey – life-time campaigner for protecting victims and children from family violence](#)
- 31 - [Voice of the child – Expert Witness and Child Psychologist Dr Sue Whitcombe](#)
- 32 - [Voice of the child – Expert Witness and Child Psychologist Dr Hamish Cameron](#)
- 33 - [Dr Amy Baker – Breaking the ties that bind – available at book stores](#)



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