

PE1790/M

Petitioner submission of 31 August 2020

I welcome the admission by the Minister for Community Safety where she admits there is a phenomenon where a child has been deliberately turned against one parent, and states this can be highly distressing.

However, Scottish Government officials recommended the phenomenon which is currently known as Parental alienation not be included in the Children Scotland Bill.

The minister primarily relates to this is not a necessity for the court (family) to include provision for this phenomenon, which in my opinion is moot as the major factor in the phenomenon which is currently known as Parental Alienation is the criminal act of coercive control of both the child and the target parent.

Coercive control of a child is a criminal act under the Serious Crime Act 2015 and also a criminal act where a partner or ex-partner exerts coercive control over the other under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill 2018 therefore the recognition and provision for the phenomenon known currently as Parental Alienation should be dealt in the criminal court and not the civil family court.

The admission from the Minister for Community Safety has helpfully acknowledged this phenomenon and states that is it distressing:

May I respectfully request that the committee call on an expert child psychologist in Parental Alienation to provide evidence.

The highly qualified expert will be able to prove that the phenomenon known as Parental Alienation is not merely distressing, this term devalues and depreciates the actual and highly significant harm caused and is far from an honest evaluation of trauma, PTSD and a whole list of more than significant abuse caused to the child's psyche and mental health and the term distressing gives little weight to the too the undeniable lack of the term used being "the paramount welfare of the child."

The Scottish Government have just announced their programme for government outlining the work they will do to support to make Scotland the best country in the world in which to grow up, learn, work and live. Therefore, full, and frank cognisance should be given to the following to ensure the best outcomes for children and adults from the cradle to the grave.

Solving Parental Alienation will contribute positively to Scotland's Social & Financial Economy

Many social and financial cost savings can be made not only in the reduction of services required but by reversal of the trends in fatherlessness and mother lessness that research has been shown can result in many detrimental adverse childhood experiences and life outcomes for the paramount welfare of the child.

Fatherlessness

The US academic Sara McLanahan found negative effects of father absence on outcomes in educational attainment, mental health, relationship formation and stability, and labour force success. Boys who grow up without a father are twice as likely to end up in jail than those who come from two-parent families.

And Barack Obama in the US on Father's Day in 2008 in a speech

"We know the statistics — that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioural problems or run away from home or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it.

How many times in the last year has Scotland lost a child at the hands of another child? How many times have our hearts stopped in the middle of the night with the sound of a gunshot or a siren? How many teenagers have we seen hanging around on street corners when they should be sitting in a classroom? How many are sitting in prison when they should be working, or at least looking for a job? How many in this generation are we willing to lose to poverty or violence or addiction? How many?"

Mother,lessness

Regarding Mother,lessness it was found that:

Children that come from motherless homes have difficulties developing bonds with other adults besides the father.

There is an increased level of fear and anxiety that is present with children from motherless homes because they are scared that other adults will also leave or be withheld contact from them by coercive control.

There is a two-fold grieving process for children in motherless homes because the lost relationship is missed and then any hope of a reunion with the mother is then abandoned as well.

Children who come from motherless homes have a higher risk of isolation because they are uncomfortable around other children who speak about their mothers.

There is an increased risk of future abuse and abandonment occurring at the hands of children who come from motherless homes.

More information about the impact of traumatic childhood experiences can be found here: <https://www2.ljworld.com/news/2009/oct/06/traumatic-childhood-takes-20-years-life-expectancy/>