

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

CHILDREN (SCOTLAND) BILL

ANONYMOUS SUBMISSION 6

There is no mention of Parental Alienation or steps to be taken to address this serious issue. It was mentioned when we were asked to contribute opinions regarding proposed changes in Family Law via a survey earlier in the year. Why has it apparently disappeared?

We cannot understand that if the child is at the centre and children's rights of the utmost importance along with their health and well-being, why this serious condition is being ignored. It is thoroughly researched and scientifically proven. It can have the most dreadful implications for a child's mental health in later life.

There is a grave danger in listening to the voice of a child who has effectively been brain-washed and is under coercive control.

Professionals without training ascribe maturity to a child totally rejecting a parent when it is a well known fact that even children who have suffered physical or sexual abuse long for a relationship with both parents. Unfortunately this has been seen in court hearings on various occasions. This is emotional abuse and must be dealt with as such.

Parental Alienation is counterintuitive and must be addressed at the earliest possible stage to prevent long term damage to a child's emotional and mental health. It is imperative that the Government gives this due consideration. The First Minister herself said that the success of a country was not measured merely by the GDP but by the health and happiness of its people. We are going to have many emotionally damaged children who may end up with mental health issues in adulthood due to this condition if it is not dealt with in an appropriate manner.

In Parental Alienation, the youngster is not only deprived of the love and care of one of his/her parents, they are also cut off from loving grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and in severe cases friends they have had throughout Primary School. All down to the controlling influence of the other parent who to professionals gives the impression that he/she is kind and caring when in fact they are cutting off family and friends who have been loving and supportive previously.

A child may have access to only one parent for a variety of reasons but the serious factor in Parental Alienation is that the controlling, alienating parent denigrates the Alienated Parent and his/her family which creates in a child what is termed as "splitting" where the child sees one parent as good and the other as bad. This has a huge emotional impact on the child not only in the present but for years to come.

We sincerely hope that this issue will be addressed and provision made within the bill to protect children from this serious emotional abuse.