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29th June 2020

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Janet

Petition P-05-751 Recognition of Parental Alienation

Thank you for the opportunity of responding to the letter from Nigel Brown dated 5th May regarding our petition.

I would like once more to thank the Committee for their efforts in regard to this petition. We have previously stated that we believe that Cafcass Cymru would not have made any effort to understand Parental Alienation without the work of the Committee.

Cafcass Cymru do not measure the outcomes of what they do. An outcome measure would provide information on what difference the service / action / guidance etc had to the users as well as to the staff. Without outcome measurement it is hard to assess whether the service provided by Welsh Government at an annual cost in excess of £12 million provides value for money.

The reluctance by Cafcass Cymru to acknowledge Parental Alienation and the harm this form of child abuse inflicts on children and young people has been evident in all of their actions in response to the petition and in their evidence to the Committee.

Nigel Brown is suggesting to the members of the Committee that without any form of output or outcome measures you should be reassured because Cafcass Cymru is **'...a Directorate of the Welsh Government and accountable to both the Minister and the Director General for Health and Social Services.'** They also assert that Cafcass Cymru **'has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure accountability of the**



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measures These assertions are somewhat undermined by the fact that they won't provide the Committee with any data, nor any indication of what those measures are. This is tantamount to Cafcass Cymru saying **'trust me I'm a doctor'**, and is exactly why we suggested that output and outcome measures need to be in place for this and other aspects of their work.

I have received today (Monday 29th June) communication from Cafcass Cymru that states that the guidance on 'Children's Resistance Or Refusal To Spend Time with a Parent' was launched at a training event requiring the attendance of all Cafcass Cymru practitioner staff in June 2019. What they haven't stated is whether all staff did attend or include any monitoring of the use of the guidance. In terms of the impact of the guidance- which itself is deeply flawed - we see almost no practical recognition of the issues by frontline staff. We would also draw the Committee's attention to the FOI response published by Welsh Government in 2017 regarding attendance at Cafcass Cymru training which suggests that even attending these events appears to be optional. ⁱ

We are not reassured to learn that Cafcass Cymru has implemented a Quality Assurance, Learning and Improvement (QALI) framework because once again there is no information on the extent to which this framework is monitored in relation to outputs or outcomes. The Key Performance Indicators for the service simply monitor whether cases have been allocated to a member of staff, and whether they have met the filing date for a report to the Family Court in individual cases. This is the equivalent of suggesting that you've passed the exam by turning up and writing your name at the top of the paper.

There have never been any measurements of the quality of the service, despite many attempts that we have made directly with Cafcass Cymru and through the Advisory Committee to suggest that such measures are required.

We strongly urge the Committee to reject entirely the letter from Nigel Brown dated 5th May 2020 and to ask why they are incapable of implementing outcome measures for their service.

Your sincerely

NATIONAL MANAGER, BOTH PARENTS MATTER / IDVA, AEGIS DV

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ⁱ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-01/171103atish11616doc1.pdf>