



FNF BOTH PARENTS MATTER CYMRU
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18th September 2018

David Rowlands AM
Chair- Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear David

Petition P-05-751 – Recognition of Parental Alienation

We have considered the various items of correspondence from the Minister as well as from the Chair of the Education Committee.

We are profoundly concerned that Cafcass Cymru are continuing to fail to properly recognise and address the issue of Parental Alienation in a way that will protect children in Wales from harm.

During questioning of the Chief Executive of Cafcass Cymru, Nigel Brown, by members of the Committee at the evidence session on 1st May we believe that a commitment was made to follow the approach of Cafcass in England – in which we have a high level of confidence. Information shared with me at the meeting of the Cafcass Cymru Advisory Committee in June of this year has now cast significant doubt on that.

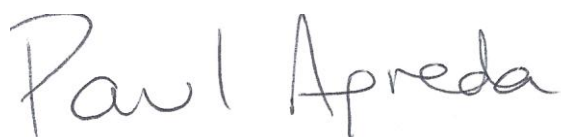
Cafcass Cymru are planning an approach under a High Conflict pathway that includes a number of elements including the controversial CAWAC assessment tool that Members of the Welsh Assembly have been denied the opportunity to scrutinise. The document shared with the Advisory Committee entitled 'Best Practice Approaches to Private Law – Child in Focus' is referred to obliquely by the Minister in his response. Having read that brief document it gives us grave concerns for the way in which Cafcass Cymru are proposing to proceed with work in this area.

Firstly, there remains a deep and worrying resistance to use the term Parental Alienation. Instead the Cafcass Cymru document continues to use the term Alienating Behaviours. The first part of the draft refers to high conflict, but seems to include alienation – this is unclear and confusing. We believe that there needs to be a much more focussed explanation on the range of cases this pathway hopes to encompass.

It is fundamental for Cafcass Cymru to understand that conflict – high or otherwise – is not always a feature in cases of alienation particularly where you have one parent with personality traits of manipulateness and deceitfulness and another, passive parent, who actively seeks to avoid conflict. We believe that this creates a differential approach to the work being undertaken by Cafcass in England. They have undertaken a wide ranging consultation and collaboration with organisations which have a particular interest in and understanding of Parental Alienation and have listened and amended their initial approach. It appears that Cafcass Cymru are basing their approach on an outdated version of some of the earlier drafts of the work now being progressed by Cafcass – which again appears very concerning.

We would strongly recommend that the Petitions Committee invite Nigel Brown and Beth Altman – who is leading on the Best Practice Approach – to give evidence to the Committee – sharing with you their most up to date thinking and procedures around Parental Alienation, explaining why they believe their approach is better than that being adopted by Cafcass in England. We believe that a separate request to Cafcass in England to provide oral evidence would enable the Committee to gain a better understanding of the ways that they are significantly ahead of their Welsh colleagues and encourage a greater flow of ideas between the organisations.

regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Apreda". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Apreda" clearly distinguishable.

Paul Apreda

National Manager

FNF Both Parents Matter