

## Open Letter: Calling on MPs to Legislate Against so-called “Parental Alienation”

Parental alienation theory has been a harmful pseudoscience that, for years, has cast a long shadow over the family courts. It has denied justice to countless children and parents, prioritising discredited concepts over safeguarding and proper child protection measures. Recent guidance from the Family Justice Council has finally recognised the dangers of this theory, but the damage it has caused demands immediate legislative action to ensure children are no longer put at risk.

In cases where mothers speak out in court to protect their children from abuse, they are often accused of manipulating their children against the father, under the guise of so-called "parental alienation." This strategy has been devastatingly effective. Fathers alleging parental alienation frequently claim that abuse reports are fabrications, leading courts to rely on the opinions of so-called “parental alienation experts.” These individuals, often without legitimate clinical qualifications in recognised psychological disciplines, have wielded disproportionate influence in court decisions. Tragically, these experts have been instrumental in placing children into the care of their abusers, with mothers vilified for attempting to shield their children.

The Family Justice Council’s new guidance exposes parental alienation theory as unfit for use in legal proceedings, stating clearly that it is pseudoscience. The Council’s position is unequivocal: it is inappropriate for any expert to use parental alienation theory to influence court decisions. This acknowledgment is a watershed moment, recognising that flawed expert testimony has contributed to unsafe custody arrangements and exposed children to ongoing abuse and trauma.

The repercussions of these unsafe decisions are stark. Children subjected to abuse have been left without recourse to justice, and mothers have faced institutional gaslighting, branded as alienators for simply advocating for their children’s safety. This has left a generation of children suffering the consequences of systemic failings in the family courts. The guidance is a step forward, but it is not enough. Children already harmed by these practices remain abandoned by the system, with no clear pathway to rectify past wrongs.

While the new guidance will help prevent future injustices, it does nothing for those children whose lives have already been profoundly affected. The family courts have washed their hands of these cases, leaving families to bear the weight of trauma without any hope of redress. It is unconscionable that children, whose abuse was ignored or dismissed under the guise of discredited theories, remain without protection or recognition.

We are calling on all Members of Parliament to act. It is imperative that we move beyond guidance and introduce legislation to ban the use of parental alienation theory in all family court proceedings. This legislation must also mandate the review of cases where

parental alienation claims were used to diminish or discredit allegations of abuse. The courts must be held accountable, and the safety of children must become the primary focus of family law.

We would like to request a meeting to discuss this matter further and to urge your support for legislative change. It is time to ensure that no child is left to suffer the consequences of harmful pseudoscience. Children's safety cannot wait.

Yours sincerely,

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