

Carl Sargeant AC/AM
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-751
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/00733/17

Mike Hedges AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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23 June 2017

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 18 May following the Petition Committee's consideration of my response to the 'Recognition of Parental Alienation' petition at its meeting of 9 May. I have noted the dissatisfaction with my response raised by Committee members and the petition sponsor, Families Need Fathers Both Parents Matter Cymru, in the enclosed letter.

CAFCASS Cymru and its practitioner staff fully understand that children can be subject to emotional harm when one parent alienates the child against another parent. I am sure you will be fully aware that safeguarding and the protection of children are fundamental features of social workers' training and the Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) framework equips practitioners with the knowledge and skills they need to work in complex situations. Private law cases often involve disputes between parents over child arrangements; social workers and practitioners, as professionals, are experienced in handling disputes of varying levels of severity. Social workers are supervised by senior staff in their organisations, this provides an additional level of scrutiny to support safe and robust practice.

CAFCASS Cymru practitioners have a range of tools they can use to support their work. One of these is the Child and Adolescent Welfare Assessment Checklist (CAWAC); this is an academically validated tool in which all CAFCASS Cymru practitioner staff receive accredited training. The CAWAC has been developed to assess the psychological impact on the child living in a context of inter-parental conflict (i.e. where the conflict is frequent, intense and poorly resolved). The CAWAC also helps to identify situations where a child as evidenced through their responses, has been negatively influenced against a parent.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In recognition of the importance of this issue, 'implacable hostility' as a practice area has been incorporated into CAF/CASS Cymru's learning and development plan. The learning and development plan is reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.

Data collected by CAF/CASS Cymru does not identify specific themes or behaviours; therefore information on the number of cases where implacable hostility features is not available.

My view and that of the Family Justice Network in Wales remains that the existing regulatory and legal framework contains provisions to deal appropriately and effectively with these behaviours. The family court's primary concern when making decisions is always focussed on the welfare of the child.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Sargeant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C' and a long, sweeping tail.

Carl Sargeant AC/AM

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