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| A picture containing drawing  Description automatically generated | SPRING 2024 ONLINE CONFERENCE |

**So-called ‘PARENTAL ALIENATION’ – Debates and Controversies**

Monday, 4 March 2024, 9.30 am – 13:55pm by Zoom

Following on from Nagalro’s excellent conference in October 2022 on domestic abuse (DA) and coercive and controlling behaviours (CCB), Chaired by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, our Spring 2024 conference will examine the so-called ‘parental alienation’ (PA) ‘model’ and myths, it's history within the UK Family Courts, and the current debates and controversies. We aim to examine the lens of interpretation through which allegations of so-called PA reframe the issues before the Court, and demonstrate how easy it is to lose focus, so that the child becomes the object rather than the subject. We also hope to create learning points about so-called PA for attendees from other jurisdictions and professions.

It is imperative that social workers working in private law within the Family Courts keep the focus on the Section 1 Children Act 1989 - that the child’s welfare is always the paramount consideration throughout - with due regard to the parties and the child’s Article 6 and Article 8 rights. Equally important is the assessment of significant harm that is required under S7 where any allegations of abuse of a child or domestic abuse are made. An increasingly high number of Family Court cases where allegations of domestic abuse (DA) go on to have counter claims of so-called PA. We will address some of the facts and figures, and flag up that there is no reliable research base for claims of so-called PA.

The landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 brought changes which crucially recognised children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right for the very first time. From this base we will look at the evidence around DA, child abuse (CA) and so-called PA, and we will examine:

* Key judgements, legislation and statutory guidance – the legal framework
* Is there any reliable evidence base for so-called PA?
* Are we seeing an erosion of the voice of the child? Is what the child says understood?
* The crucial importance of early Fact Finding Hearings
* The role of the expert in allegations of DA, CA and so-called PA – Part 25 Experts and Assessors
* The landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and guidance and Duties under Practice Directions [12J (child arrangements and domestic violence), 3AA (special measures) and 25 (experts)],
* If a child is resistant to spending time with one parent post separation – whose role or responsibility is it to establish the facts?
* What are so-called ‘alienating behaviours’, and what is their impact?
* How to balance competing concepts of harm?
* What further guidance and training is needed on DA, CCB and so-called PA?

**Conference Chair: Professor Jo Delahunty KC (4Paper Buildings)**

Jo Delahunty is a specialist child abuse silk, family recorder and lecturer. She has forged her reputation in the most serious child abuse cases, and deals with the most complex private law cases involving allegations of domestic abuse (DA), coercive and controlling behaviours (CCB) and so-called ‘parental alienation’ (PA). Jo will lead the way through our highly experienced presenters, who will challenge and hopefully channel our thinking and understanding of so-called PA. They have been chosen from differing perspectives to include:

Starting with: Chair’s Introduction - Professor Jo Delahunty KC– the broader legal perspective.

1. Dr Julie Doughty, Cardiff University (co-author of Review of Research and Case Law on so-called ‘parental alienation’ (2018) will present a current research overview – law and practice.

2. Sarah Parsons, Deputy Director for Improvement and Principal Social Worker Cafcass. Sarah has played a key role in leading the development of the Child Impact Assessment Framework.

3. Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner

4. Jenny Beck KC from Beck Fitzgerald Sols will talk about complex cases from the coalface.

5. A young person and her mother will talk about their experiences of so-called ‘parental alienation’ allegations in the family courts.

6. The Family Justice Young People’s Board on hearing and understanding the child’s voice.

7. Dr Jaime Craig, co-chair of FJC working group on [responding to allegations of alienating behaviour](https://www.judiciary.uk/family-justice-council/working-groups-3/responding-to-allegations-of-alienating-behaviour/)

Ending with: Learning points – panel discussion.

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The Conference will attract 4.5 CPD hours and be of interest to academics, barristers, solicitors, family court advisers, children’s guardians, independent social workers, local authority social workers, family support workers and mediators, judges, admin