

In October of this year Anthony Douglas attended a Parental Alienation Workshop in London. He sat through a very uncomfortable (for him at least) presentation by HHJ Wildblood and then gave his talk on how PA had affected him personally, how he was the one in Cafcass pushing PA forward etc etc and then he took some questions from the floor:

You can watch the whole thing here:

You may hear an interesting question around the 14 minute mark where Anthony Douglas is asked about Parental Alienation training and the research we uncovered into his FCAs not being bothered to do his training. He replied to say that they were “too busy” to do their training!!

If only we’d had time to point out that over 1,300 of his FCAs found time to do their Expenses training... THAT would have thrown his “too busy” statement into question.

High Conflict Pathway

Skip forward to the 20 minute mark and you’ll hear another question from the floor, this time from a practicing healthcare specialist asking why training isn’t mandatory, as it is within the NHS.

In response Anthony Douglas (from 21:44 until the end) talks about the launch of his High Conflict Pathway tool and training and waves a document around in support of his assertion that he’s on top of this and future training will be mandatory. Listen to his words yourself.

But now take a look at what we’ve uncovered:

- [High Conflict Child Arrangement Disputes Handbook](#) PDF
- [High Conflict CA Disputes](#) PDF

If you listen to Anthony Douglas’ words you’d be forgiven, like Paul Aprea from Families need Fathers, that none of us need to worry, that Anthony Douglas has got it all in hand, and that this new High Conflict Pathway is the answer to our children’s problems.

Until you read it.

Let’s take a look at slide 7 which is where Parental Alienation first gets a mention:

Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS)

This term has come to be used inappropriately. It is described as a Syndrome – a label coined in the US by Richard Gardner a psychiatrist in 1985, who coined the term to describe his clinical impressions of cases he believed involved false allegations of child sexual abuse.

However his work consisted largely of anecdotal evidence, it lacked credible research, and has no scientific evidence. Cafcass staff should be careful in using the term '*parental alienation*'



Well that's not very promising... and neither is the very next slide:

Parental Alienation

- ▶ In recent years parental alienation syndrome has been alleged in many cases where a child refuses to see a NRP and it has drifted into popular use. In some cases by a parent seeking to exercise power and control over the other
- ▶ Cafcass practitioner's should be careful using these terms, as it risks confusion. That is not to say a child cannot be alienated by one parent against another
- ▶ They key issue for the Cafcass practitioner is the impact for the child. It is the task of an FCA to determine if the RP is unduly influencing the child or acting responsibly to protect



It gets worse...

Working with the Child

- ▶ When speaking to children it is important to check they understand that the dispute is between their parents and that it is for the court and not them, to decide what is best for them.
- ▶ Scaling questions can set the scene and enable you to go on to ask what it would take to move forward.
E.g.
 - ▶ Question: “ On a scale of 1 -10 how much would you like to see your father?”
 - ▶ Answer: “2”
 - ▶ Followed up with
 - ▶ Question: “*What would need to happen to move this to a 6?*”



This is just more of what we've seen throughout Cafcass training: gender bias, non-neutral language, non-evidence based approaches, questions written by uneducated people... the list goes on and on and on...

We look at where they're referencing this nonsense from and we come back to the old [Cafcass Library](#) thing.

References:

Parental Alienation Syndrome and Alienated Children - getting it wrong in child custody cases. Carol S. Bruch. Child and Family Law Quarterly, Vol 14, No 4, 2002

Is Parental Alienation Disorder a Valid Concept? Not According to Scientific Evidence. A Review of Parental Alienation, M. Brianna Pepiton, Lindsey J. Alvis, Kenneth Allen & Gregory Logid (2012) Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21:2, 244-253

When we look at who authored this we see, again, that it has been authored by Cafcass' internal National Improvement Service (NIS) and that they've not brought in any external experts in - no PA experts, no subject matter experts, no 3rd party training companies, no psychologists, and no children mental health specialists.

Are these people for real?

Is Anthony Douglas having a laugh at our expense?

It all comes back to the thread that runs through Cafcass: they're unqualified, out of touch, and incompetent. The sooner they recognise and accept that the sooner they'll reach out for help and assistance from the experts and we can all start to move forward. The NIS are the very last people who should be authoring any training within Cafcass, never mind pathways for diagnosis.

FnF and Anthony Douglas

This is how FnF summed up the presentation by Anthony Douglas. At 9:40 Paul Apreda starts on his eulogy to Anthony Douglas. He has a throwaway comment about it not being helpful when people "throw rocks" at Cafcass which we believe is directed at our questioning of Douglas on his training record and his leadership of Cafcass.

At 10:40 Paul Apreda says we shouldn't throw rocks at Cafcass or Douglas, a point we'll come back to. Paul calls for solutions: we have several starting with the dismissal of Douglas, the appointment of a more appropriate and focused leader of Cafcass, and wholesale reform of their FCAs.

The High Conflict Pathway and our research into it is a prime example of why FnF shouldn't be cosying up to Cafcass and Douglas - they cannot take this organisation at its word. History shows that clearly,

I would like to point out that we're not lumping Vincent McGovern of FnF in this. Vincent

can be heard from 21 minutes onwards. Vincent does not share Paul Apreda's sycophancy for Douglas. You can hear his comments on the lack of training from 26 minutes. Well worth a listen.

Throwing Rocks

We'll continue to throw rocks at any organisation that is supposed to safeguard and protect children within the UK family law system. Somebody has to hold these people to account and if the incumbent snouts in the trough don't do it then we will.

Do not think for one moment that any of our research team came to this lightly. Every single one of us expected the system and support organisations, like Cafcass, to do their jobs properly. We had, we believe, a reasonable expectation that professionalism and integrity should prevail.

Sadly this isn't the case.

The more we dig, the more manure we find.

Not only in Cafcass and the Child Maintenance Service, but also in Local Authorities, in schools, in Safeguarding Boards, in the NHS, and in the Judiciary. We also find it endemic within many of the long standing charities supposedly set-up to provide support and help to parents and children going through this dreadful situation.

Every single one of them should take a good hard look at themselves and ask why it is that they have never dug this stuff up themselves. It can't be that they didn't know; many of them have been at this for 20 years and more.

As for throwing rocks; with the greatest of respect, if they had thrown a few rocks themselves instead of sticking their snouts in the trough then this generation of children could have been saved from this debacle.

You should be ashamed of yourselves.

High Conflict Pathway

The documents that we have seen show clearly that Cafcass do not have a clue what they are doing.

The studies they're reliant on are selective, out of date, and seem to show that PA doesn't exist. The rest of the material fails in similar ways. It refers to the deeply [discredited Impact of Parental Conflict Tool](#) and follows it up by including the [Cafcass safe_contact_indicator Tool PDF](#) which we've already had analysed and found it in contradiction of their own training on [Post-separation Control Knowledge Bite](#) and [Coached Children Knowledge Bite](#) (not that many of them have done that training).

This is an absolute disgrace and we will be writing an open letter to Anthony Douglas shortly to push this point home.

Getting the same people to write training materials based on the faulty literature is not a solution, no matter what his buddy Paul Apreda may think.

HHJ Wildblood on Parental Alienation

You should also watch HHJ Stephen Wildblood here and his thoughts on Parental Alienation that come in front of him, especially his views on wishes and feelings reports which we share:

Next steps

Comment your hearts out below - we'd love to hear what YOU think of this, and especially the High Conflict Pathway that Cafcass are proposing as a solution.



[Voice of the Child](#)

In a Family Law system designed for combative parents there is no real allowance for the views of children and any understanding of how Family Law ultimately impacts on children most of all.

We speak for the children in Family Law so that, finally, the children have a voice.

Also published on [Medium](#).

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- [yes](#) [no](#)