*Your name*

 *Address*

*Date*

*Mr/Ms Surname MP*

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Dear *(Name of MP)*

**Child Alienation and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021**

I am writing to ask you to make representations to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and the Secretary of State for the Home Department to issue guidance under Section 84 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to state that the alienation of a child from one parent by psychological manipulation is an example of child abuse that can cause lasting harm to the child and is therefore covered by the definition of Domestic Abuse.

Children are being subjected to a form mental abuse which results in their alienation from a parent (parent being as defined by Part 1, Section 2 (2) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021). This abuse is not currently recognised either in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 or the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The Domestic Abuse Act outlines in Part 1, Section 3 that a child is a victim of domestic abuse when the child “sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse”. This definition therefore does not capture the situation where one parent may subject the child directly to abuse, in the form as defined by Part 1, Section 1 (3), specifically “controlling or coercive behaviour” or “psychological, emotional or other abuse”.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1933, as amended, defines abuse in Section 1, as wilful assault, ill-treatment, neglect, abandonment, or causes such treatment. Again, this does not capture the situation when a parent presents themselves as caring but makes statements that suggest that they are a victim, and the target parent is the uncaring parent who has abandoned the child (and themself).

The abuse to which I refer is that which takes the form of the abusing parent subjecting the child knowingly and / or unknowingly, to psychological manipulation that results in the child resisting or being hostile towards the other parent to whom they have a safe, secure, and loving attachment. Sir Anthony Douglas, former chief executive of CAFCASS stated that:

***“Alienation is one type of adult behaviour which causes adverse childhood experiences. At worst, it is emotionally violent. Therefore, I have suggested that alienation is a form of child abuse. It can have as devastating an impact as physical abuse and can lead directly to child or adolescent mental health problems.” (The UK Parental Alienation Study)***

Such behaviour can take the form of:

* Preventing the child from spending time with the other parent or interfering with that time through calls messages and other interruptions
* Disposing of gifts, photographs, letters, and other moments given to the child by the target parent, fostering a belief that the target parent does not love the child
* Interfering with the target parent’s parental responsibility by failing to consult on medical or educational issues and/or failing to relay important health and schooling information
* Repeatedly, covertly and / or overtly denigrating and devaluing the target parent in the presence of the child
* Burdening their child with angry or emotional outbursts, usually linked to time the child spends with the target parent; in this way a child is manipulated to feel responsible for the parent’s emotional stability by ceasing contact with the target parent
* Sudden or covert removal of the child and / or child’s belongings from the targeted parent’s home
* Absence of effort, investigative or resolution-focused approach to have the child continue their relationship and contact with the targeted parent
* Absence or refusal to acknowledge the risks and long-term impacts (developmental and otherwise) for the child related to the disconnection from the targeted parent
* Using the children as pawns for financial gain
* Exposing children to adult matters
* Creating fear in the child, especially of their other parent and wider family members, when there is no real threat.

All this, and other examples as outlined in the following report, result in the child becoming alienated from their second parent: <https://parentalalienationuk.info/our-report>

We understand that the Family Courts need to find the balance between protecting a child from an abusive parent and ensuring equal access and parenting rights. However, parents who present as “Admirable” (Katz 2020) and then use this to create partisan loyalty in both the child and the surrounding social structures (such as the Family Courts, Police, Schools) needs to also be identified as an abusive parent from whom a child should be protected. This process of abuse severely impacts on the mental health of the child/ren now and in the future.

**Please act!**

Yours faithfully

*Please print and sign name*