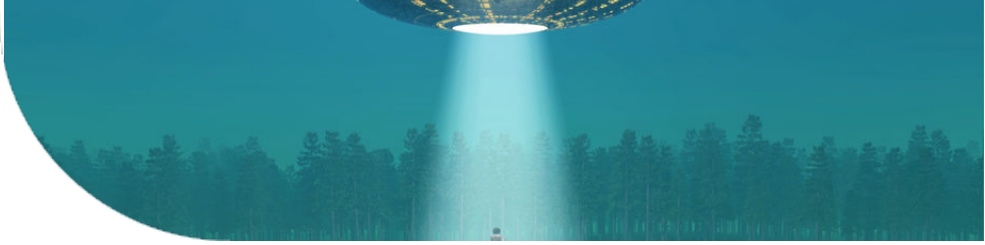

Parental Alienation – What Is It and How to Stop It

In another instalment of our Halloween themed blog posts, our family lawyers look at the spooky and sometimes scary topic of parental alienation. We first consider what parental alienation is, and then we discuss what you can do to stop it.

What is Parental Alienation?

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) define parental alienation as "*when a child's resistance or hostility towards one parent is not justified and is the result of psychological manipulation by the other parent.*"

Parental alienation is a significant legal issue and whilst alienation can be demonstrated solely by one parent, whether male or female, CAFCASS make it clear that both parents play a role, and it is often a combination of child and adult behaviours and attitudes that lead to the child rejecting or resisting contact.

Alienating behaviours can be a number of things, including, but not limited to:

- One parenting constantly badmouthing, undermining or belittling the other;
- Forbidding a child to talk about the other parent or how they spend their time with the other parent;
- Blaming the other parent for the family's separation, or for things that go wrong;
- Preventing contact with the other parent;
- Telling the child that the other parent does not love or care about them and is not interested in them; and
- Seeking to exclude the other parent from important decisions and events.

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How do I stop it?

If you suspect the other parent is alienating your child against you, the first step is to contact our experienced family legal team at Lester Aldridge as soon as possible by emailing online.enquiries@la-law.com. If there are serious concerns of parental alienation, you can make an application to the court.

Once the court is involved, CAFCASS will also be notified and will prepare a report to assist the court in their decisions on what contact the children should have with each parent. The CAFCASS officer undertaking the assessment will focus on what is happening for each child, and the starting point of their assessment is the identification of risk. CAFCASS are alive to the issues of parental alienation and have experience spotting the signs. They are also aware of how harmful such alienating behaviours are to children and will raise this to the court's attention.

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