



Angela Ruberto
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Your ref: CAF 20-035
Our ref: Gov/CAF 20-035

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03 March 2020

Dear Ms Ruberto

Re: Freedom of Information request

Thank you for your email of 01 March 2020. You made the following requests for information:

[What assessment protocol do FCA's uses to assess for parental alienation under the CIAF?](#)

Cafcass understands and recognises the potential for the 'alienation' of a child from one parent in high conflict private law cases. Our role is to establish the impact of alienating behaviours on the child concerned, where these are present, and to recommend to the courts what referrals, intervention or support is needed to end or lessen any harmful impact. Please see page 63 of the [Operating Framework](#) which outlines the possible impact of parental alienation on children.

Building on existing guidance, the [Cafcass Child Impact Assessment Framework](#) (CIAF) has been developed to help our FCAs identify how children are experiencing parental separation and to assess the impact of different case factors on them, including parental alienation.

The CIAF brings together guides and tools which FCAs can use to help them assess the impact of different case factors on the children we work with. This includes domestic abuse; harmful conflict; child refusal or resistance to spend time with one of their parents; and other forms of harmful parenting such as substance misuse or mental health difficulties. The resources and tools relating to child refusal or resistance to spend time with one of their parents; can be found here: <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/professionals/ciaf/resources-for-assessing-child-refusal-resistance/>

All of our assessments focus on what is happening for each child. In our work, we try to help parents and the court understand the impact of the separation and adult behaviours on

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individual children and what they need to recover. This requires the support of both parents, who are encouraged to exercise their parental responsibility wherever safe and beneficial for the child.

The starting point of assessment is always the identification of risk, which includes risk of emotional harm, which may amount to a child protection issue. We recognise that exposure to alienating behaviours can be emotionally harmful to children.

Where alienating behaviours feature in a case we are involved with, our practitioners will use their professional judgement to assess whether it is safe and in the best interests of the child to have contact with one or both parents, taking into account risk factors, evidence-based assessments, diversity issues, and the child's resilience and vulnerabilities. We then report our recommendations to the court for the judge to consider before they make their final decision about what contact the child will have with either parent.

Please see our website for more information about [parental alienation](#) and the [CIAF](#).

We hope that you feel your question has been answered effectively. If you are unhappy with the decisions made in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review to be undertaken. If you are dissatisfied with the way the internal review is handled or with the final decision made at that review about the information released, you are free to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (<https://ico.org.uk/>):

Post

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Wycliffe House, Water Lane,
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SK9 5AF

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Yours sincerely,

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