

Specialist services for
families experiencing
parental alienation



Family
Separation
Clinic

'The Family Separation Clinic is pioneering in its delivery, offering something that is long overdue and greatly needed in my view. The work delivered in this case has been exemplary, offering resolution in an almost impossible impasse at a critical juncture.'

His Honour Justice B (London)

Family Separation Clinic LLP
50 Liverpool Street
London
EC2M 7PY

office@familyseparationclinic.co.uk

Partnership Number: OC393618

About us

The Family Separation Clinic brings together a range of independent professionals with backgrounds in family therapy, child and adolescent psychiatry, social work, dispute resolution and family law and is dedicated to offering specialist services to families experiencing divorce or separation and to professionals who may be working with them.

Our services are delivered by fully qualified professionals with many years experience in delivering support to families as they go through the challenges of family transition. We are dedicated to helping achieve happier outcomes for children throughout their lives.

Our work

At the Family Separation Clinic, we specialise in working with families where children are refusing to have a relationship with a parent after separation, this is sometimes called *parental alienation* or *alienation in a child*. We work with children in these circumstances as well as parents and the wider family.

Our approach to this work is multi stranded and we can offer differing levels of services to support families and the professionals who work with them. Examples of how we work with professionals include:

Consultancy to local authorities

We work with social work teams to advise and deliver treatment routes for families where parental alienation is a feature.

Consultancy to legal teams

We work to assist legal teams to build arguments and strategies to demonstrate the existence of parental alienation in a case.

Forensic expertise

We offer analysis and research evidence to support arguments in court.

Expert witness services

We offer parental assessments and case analysis in cases where alienation is considered to be a possibility and structured treatment routes in cases which are seen as viable for our intervention.

Underpinning our work is our pioneering approach to differentiating cases of Parental Alienation in order to match treatment to the problem and create swift resolutions to entrenched and complex cases.



We have particular expertise in working with families where children have rejected a parent or are at risk of doing so.

Parental alienation assessment and treatment

The concept of the alienated child was introduced by Canadian psychologists Kelly and Johnson (2001) who reworked some of Gardener's (1985) original analysis of 'Parental Alienation Syndrome'. In the intervening years, the phenomenon of the alienated child has become more familiar to professionals working in the field of divorce and separation.

Courts and practitioners concerned with management of cases in court, are more regularly dealing with children who express a desire to end a relationship with a parent, and children whose wishes and feelings are expressed clearly and unequivocally may present particular dilemmas for the courts. With an increasing emphasis on hearing *the voice of the child*, understanding the deeper narrative of the separated family, as it is presented by a child's refusal, can throw up powerful challenges.

Alienation in children is the end result of a spectrum experience in which they are either influenced and or pressured by parents to align themselves to one or the other (or sometimes both at the same time) or by the difficult dynamics created by both parents that prevents children from being able to cross the psychological gap that exists between them.

The Family Separation Clinic accepts referrals for assessment* and treatment where alienation is believed to be present. Our approach provides a combination of differentiation of alienation followed by the delivery of combined treatment routes to liberate children from their alienation reaction.

Assessment of referrals begins with a comprehensive analysis of the case to determine whether it is, indeed, a case of alienation or whether there are elements of justified rejection within it. We further differentiate between the child who is alienated because of the conflicted dynamics around them from the child who is in the care of an implacably hostile or alienating parent.

Assessments include an analysis of the history of the child's rejecting position and interviews with both parents and children. Projective testing is utilised to understand the child's responses to their parental relationships and to determine whether or not psychological splitting is present. Occasionally, we carry out an initial paper-based assessment as a precursor to a full assessment.

Treatment routes, in cases which may be described as hybrid, may utilise a combination of family therapy and

therapeutic mediation with additional elements of psycho-education and parenting co-ordination. In situations where the alienation may be considered to be pure, more robust treatment routes may be recommended. All interventions are designed individually after a detailed assessment and all are convened in ways that offer the maximum benefit for the children concerned.

** Assessment routes are designed and evaluated by the Family Separation Clinic in partnership with external research bodies.*

Kelly J.B. and Johnson J. R. (July 2001) The Alienated Child: A reformulation of Parental Alienation Syndrome. Family Court Review. 39 (3), 249.

Gardner, R.A. (1985) Recent trends in divorce and custody litigation. Academy Forum, 29 (2), 3-7.

Multi-model support through court

Our multi-model court service is designed to offer parents a fully comprehensive package as they progress through the family courts.

The multi-model court service is usually chosen by parents who are facing long court processes where their children have rejected them completely or where allegations have been made against them.

This typically combines the following services to provide parents with the emotional, psychological and practical support that they need to manage the court process effectively:

- parent coaching
- consultancy to legal teams
- research evidence
- forensic analysis
- psychological support
- treatment route advice

Understanding parental alienation and how it plays out in family situations is not straightforward and very little is known about it in legal and social care circles. Alternatively, your legal team may be wary of using parental alienation as part of your argument in court. Our work, alongside that of your legal team, can ensure that the focus is in the right places and that you are

confident and calm as you go through the process.

One of the key tasks for parents coping with an alienation reaction in a child is being able to deal with the psychological pressure that this places upon them. Our multi-model court service is designed to offer you the maximum amount of support, information, advice and guidance at the time that you need it.

The multi-model court service offers you a dedicated case worker who is highly specialised in understanding and working with parental alienation. Your case worker is available to you for an agreed amount of time and will assist you in constructing and carrying out the right kind of strategies to enable the problem of alienation to be understood in the court process.

At the same time, your case worker will support you to cope emotionally and will guide you through the issues that you need to think about as you progress your case. Your case worker will work alongside your legal team, offering input where required and advising on how best to illuminate the issue of alienation in your unique and specific case. Our multi-model court service typically costs in the region of £ 3,000 per package of care.

‘Because of your work our children are settled in their lives again and they have a good relationship with both of their parents. It was not easy getting to the point where your intervention was possible, but as soon as we did, our lives changed for the better.’

*Dr JC - children aged 11 and 13
(a previously rejected parent)*

Other services

Parenting Co-ordination

Parenting co-ordination is a way of enabling parents to have ongoing relationships with their children where conflict is causing difficulties. Our parenting co-ordinators manage the arrangements for parenting time and offer a support service for the handover of children where this has become a problem.

The key beneficiaries of parenting co-ordination are children but the aim is to ensure that the conflicted dynamics between parents are managed in ways that enable them both to continue to have strong relationships with their children after separation. In this respect, it is the whole family system which benefits as everyone is supported through the difficult process of change that family separation brings.

A parenting co-ordinator can be agreed at Court by consent or can be proposed to the Court as a way of ensuring that parenting time continues through difficult periods. Parenting co-ordinators take on the role of managing the planning of parenting time and support the handovers between parents, collecting and dropping off children and, if necessary, supporting children and parents through the process of transition between two homes. As part of their role our parenting co-ordinators also offer psycho-education about the ways in which children manage transitions between parents.

Therapeutic Family Mediation

Using a Therapeutic Family Mediation (TFM) model, we don't simply work with parents to reach a negotiated settlement, we work to assist them to resolve the deeper issues that are driving conflict as well as helping to build new and sustainable ways to manage and resolve conflict in the future.

TFM often looks at wider aspects of the relationship between the parties and how that may have contributed to the dispute. It also explores the past and current circumstances with a particular focus on outcomes for children.

We begin the mediation process by working individually, with each parent, to understand their experiences and feelings and to discuss their aspirations, both in relation to settlement of the current dispute and to the longer term parenting relationship.

Having assessed the potential for reaching a settlement we will begin the process of mediation. This takes place either in joint sessions or individually, often using VoIP, whichever is the most suitable.

Our mediation service can be used to address specific issues, usually around arrangements for children. or it can be utilised as part of a wider process and one of a range of interventions to help families move forward.

Parent Coaching

Parent coaching offers support and psycho-educational input to help parents understand the causes of conflict and the dynamics of rejection and reunification.

Parents who find themselves locked into protracted disputes can be helped to understand the underlying causes of conflict and learn new patterns of behaviour that increase the potential for resolution and, importantly, reduce the negative impact on their children.

In cases of alienation, coaching for parents who have been rejected by their children, and who are seeking to re-establish a relationship with them, works to develop an understanding of the dynamics that led to the rejection as well as promoting the necessary behavioural changes that prepare them for reunification.

Coaching for parents to whom the child has been aligned offers insights into the child's conflicted behaviour and what behavioural changes must be made by that parent in order to change the child's rejection of their other parent. This work focuses on the aligned parent as a key determinant of how the child can move beyond rejection and back into a relationship with both of their parents.

'The Family Separation Clinic has offered this family hope where none existed previously and should be commended for its dedication which goes above and beyond what can usually be expected.'

His Honour Justice M (London)

