

Typical behaviours exhibited where alienation may be a factor tool

How to use the tool

This is an analytical or 'thinking' tool to be used by Family Court Advisers (FCAs) after they have completed interviews with parents and children and gathered relevant information from other professionals. The purpose of the tool is not to apply a label to the adult behaviour, but to support the analysis of the child's experience. It is broken down into three sections:

1. *Typical behaviours by a child where they have experienced alienating behaviours*
2. *Typical alienating behaviours by a parent who is intermittently or persistently alienating*
3. *Typical behaviours by a parent from whom the child has been alienated.*

FCAs can click on 'choose an item' to indicate the frequency of the behaviours.

While these behaviours are typical, not all of them will be present in every case involving alienation, and any of the factors taken alone will not be an indicator of alienation. A cluster of **frequently** occurring typical child and adult behaviours will help to inform the analysis of child impact.

This is not a scored tool i.e. there is no numerical value to attach to the indicators or examples.

Please note: **this tool should not be used in cases where the child is resisting or refusing time with a parent as a justifiable rejection e.g. when there has been domestic abuse or other forms of harmful parenting. It is also not a relevant tool when any of the other reasons for the child's resistance or refusal e.g. affinity, attachment or the child's own independent preference are the primary factors.**

Typical behaviours exhibited by a child where they have experienced alienating behaviours

The child's opinion of a parent is unjustifiably one sided, all good or all bad; idealises one parent and devalues the other.	Choose an item.
Vilification of rejected parent; can amount to a campaign against them.	Choose an item.
Trivial, false, weak and/or irrational reasons to justify dislike or hatred.	Choose an item.
Reactions and perceptions are unjustified or disproportionate to parent's behaviours.	Choose an item.
Talks openly and without prompting about the rejected parent's perceived shortcomings	Choose an item.
Revises history to eliminate or diminish the positive memories of the previously beneficial experiences with the rejected parent. May report events that they could not possibly remember.	Choose an item.
Extends dislike / hatred to extended family of rejected parent (rejection by association)	Choose an item.
No guilt or ambivalence regarding their attitudes towards the rejected parent	Choose an item.
Speech about rejected parent appears scripted, it has an artificial quality; no conviction; uses adult language; has a rehearsed quality	Choose an item.
Claims to be fearful but is aggressive, confrontational, even belligerent.	Choose an item.
Other: _____	Choose an item.

Typical alienating behaviours demonstrated by a parent who is intermittently or persistently alienating

Actively denigrates and exaggerates flaws of other parent to the child, directly and indirectly e.g. may ask others to do this also.	Choose an item.
Coaches or instructs the child in what to say to professionals and others about negative experiences of the rejected parent.	Choose an item.
Refusal to hear positive comments about other parent; quick to discount child's good times as trivial and unimportant.	Choose an item.
Overt and covert threats to withdraw love and affection from child unless other parent, and/or siblings that live with the other parent, are rejected.	Choose an item.
Expresses no concern or empathy that the child is missing out on a previously positive relationship with the other parent. Is disinterested in the impact this may have on their development and identity.	Choose an item.
Portrays the other parent as dangerous (and this is not justified). False or fabricated allegations of physical abuse, sexual, and/or emotional abuse.	Choose an item.
Telephone messages, gifts, and communications from the other parent to child are persistently destroyed, ignored, or passed on to the child with disdain.	Choose an item.
False information repeated to child; distorts history and may make false allegations to professionals and in court proceedings	Choose an item.
Does not correct child's rude, defiant behaviour directed toward the other parent but would not permit child to do this with others.	Choose an item.
Makes the child aware of their own distress and emotional fragility.	Choose an item.
Other: _____	Choose an item.

These typical behaviours have been derived and adapted from an overview of the literature by Fidler, Bala, and Saini (2013) and Judge and Deutsch (2017).

Typical behaviours exhibited by a parent from whom the child has been alienated, which may contribute to the dynamic

Lacks empathetic connection to the child.	Choose an item.
Inept pursuit of the child, pushes calls and communications, unannounced appearances at school or activities that the child perceives as embarrassing.	Choose an item.
Harsh, rigid, and punitive parenting style (uses authoritarian parenting style as the dominant strategy).	Choose an item.
Loses temper, angry, demanding, intimidating character traits, but not to level of abuse.	Choose an item.
Outrage at challenge to his/her authority.	Choose an item.
Self-centred in relation to child.	Choose an item.
Counter-rejecting behaviour. Passivity or withdrawal in the face of the child's resistance or rejection of them.	Choose an item.
Attempts to induce guilt.	Choose an item.
Other: _____	

Derived from Whitcombe (2017).

References:

If you would like to see any of the items listed, send the 5 or 6-digit item numbers (in **bold**) to library@cafcass.gov.uk (for internal use only)

181311. Fidler, B., Bala, N. & Saini, M. (2013). *Children who resist post-separation parental contact: a differential approach for legal and mental health professionals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

203850. Judge, A. & Deutsch, R. (2017). *Overcoming parent-child contact problems: family-based interventions for resistance, rejection and alienation*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

204101. Whitcombe, S. (2017). *Parental alienation or justifiable estrangement? Assessing a child's resistance to a parent in the UK*. *Seen and Heard*, 27(3), pp.31-47

IMPORTANT: *This tool has been developed from the existing evidence base, however, is not a validated tool. The tool should be used to inform the assessment and analysis and is not a replacement for the professional judgement of the practitioner.*