

A personal story from a partners perspective

When my partner and his ex-wife first split up, he continued to see their two children regularly. He was very close to both of them. My partner is a kind, gentle and loving man. There were no safeguarding issues. He was a wonderfully involved father.

It wasn't until nine months later, once we'd become a couple, that things changed quite abruptly. It was then that he found his parenting time repeatedly frustrated, and to such an extent that it could only be wilful obstruction. He was devastated at not spending time with his children, and on top of that, his concerns on behalf of their welfare, started to mount. Eventually, haunted by the prospect of never being able to see his children, he took the only recourse open to him. He applied for a court order.

To its credit, the court did order psychologists to make an assessment, and they did identify not just obstruction, but a pattern of alienating behaviours in the mum. The problem was that all this assessment took time. Throughout all that time, the court didn't enforce any interim parenting time for my partner with his kids. So, the drawn-out procedures of the family court actually played into the hands of the alienating parent, adding months of undue influence to those already assured by the march she stole on him in the first place by acting pre-emptively to obstruct.

It wasn't only a matter of exposure time. Isolation, dependency, and filial devotion all heighten a child's susceptibility to undue influence as it develops emotionally. My partner's ex was able to exploit that susceptibility and naivety, using it to stoke fear in the children of their own father. Before the psychologist reports were completed, she went to a domestic abuse service and told them she was scared he might abduct the children, which was completely untrue. We had no intention of moving home. They were only eight and ten years old at the time. She also claimed he had threatened her.

Without any cross checks with the police, school or social workers, or a meeting with my partner to validate her accusations; staff from this domestic abuse organisation went into the former marital home, installed panic buttons connected to the police and coached his children how to 'run and hide' if they ever saw him. Inevitably, this heightened the children's concerns, undermining trust in their father, and stirring up fear that was not the least bit warranted.

They also went regularly to the children's school; allowed entry by the headteacher, again without any validation or discussion with my husband, to show them how to protect themselves from an abduction attempt. You can imagine how terrified repeatedly practicing 'Safety Plans' must have made them. Stoked to such alarm, false allegations were easily imprinted into their minds about a father they used to be so close to.

When it was shown that these allegations were completely unsubstantiated, no action was taken against their mother. She had all but destroyed my partner but there was no accountability for it.

All the judge did was write to both children, we still have a copy of her letter, and insisted they attend court to read and sign it. It told them both that their father was not guilty and hoped they'd find it in their heart to re-establish their relationship with him. But it was their choice.

How could they choose? They had been led to believe that he was a monster, a state of affairs that had compelled them to absolute trust in their one remaining parent who paradoxically had been the architect of this deception.

Our MP wrote to the service demanding answers but they refused to respond. They seem as if they are a law unto themselves, and they have destroyed the relationship between my partner and his children, indeed between my partner's entire extended his family and his children.

My partner's ex has used a false story of abuse as a pretext through which to get the family court to carry out on her behalf the very abuse she wished upon her partner; all under the guise of 'protective separation'. The paradox is that the most vulnerable, the children, are now entrapped with an abusive parent. Meanwhile, and tragically, the truly wholesome and protective parent remains unjustly maligned, and excluded from their lives. How can that be called justice for him, or for his children?