Update

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, our home life has been significantly affected. Ceirwen is an Advanced Nurse Practitioner working in out-of-hours General Practice. As GP practices are closed to face-to-face appointments, her area has seen a significant increase in patient numbers, and she is working upwards of 60 hours per week on occasion, all evenings, nights and weekends. Her patient load includes a large number of COVID-19 patients with worsening symptoms who require triage before admission or passing to A&E, and potential COVID-19 patients who arrive for assessment if they are in an at-risk group.Advanced Nurse Practitioner

While she takes all available precautions at work and on her return home, she is “prone to infection” because of this. As COVID-19 has been proven to be a danger to people of all ages, I suggested to Nicola that during this period it would not be safe nor sensible for Niamh to visit. Even after the Government confirmed that children subject to contact orders could travel between homes, the risk of infecting Niamh, and having her transfer the disease to Nicola’s household including 2 infants, didn’t make sense.

Instead, I asked if we could have at least 2 pieces of indirect contact a week. Nicola has told me that Niamh’s own phone has been taken away for reasons unknown; Niamh thoroughly enjoyed having her own phone and would often call or message me when she was out playing, or out with friends. She seemed to enjoy those calls the most and has always struggled when forced to call on her mother’s phone.

Nicola did not reply to my requests for several weeks, claiming she did not check her email. She then said I could obviously call her (Nicola’s) phone any time I wanted; however, with her ongoing narrative of domestic abuse, I am obviously extremely uncomfortable to call her at any time without express, written consent.

Niamh’s calls thereafter reverted to the old method of Nicola calling, and putting her on speakerphone. While Niamh did seem to enjoy speaking to me, there were again frequent pauses where the phone was put on mute, and Niamh then said something directed by her mother. Video calls were out of the question.

On 23 April, I received an email saying that Niamh had “requested a break” from calls from me. I can believe that Nim did not enjoy being forced to have the calls with her mother listening in, and I don’t believe this is because she wasn’t enjoying some form of contact with me. Since then, I haven’t heard anything from Nicola or Niamh; and as per the concerns about accusations of harassment or abuse, I haven’t tried to contact her.

Nicola has also continued to try and “weaponise” the situation through the Child Maintenance Service. I received a message from them that she had again tried to have a decision overturned because there was currently no shared care; they rejected this until a court order was provided. Recently I also received a message from them that she wanted to appeal their previous decision, despite them having significant proof of my current employment situation. This has been ongoing for some time; Nicola has falsely claimed to the CMS that I am working, that I am secretly running companies, that I am hiding income, and so on. When I was invited to present at an aerospace conference (for no pay) due to my experience in the field, she contacted the CMS and claimed I was working as a consultant and being highly paid for this. I was forced to get a letter from my previous employer confirming that they had not engaged me in any way since I left the company and I was forced to cancel the speaking engagement.

My main concern remains Niamh’s wellbeing. Nicola has constantly attempted to undermine our relationship with Niamh, putting pressure on Niamh to make decisions, and not in any way acting in Niamh’s best interests. This is well documented back through the reports from Tricia and the Curatrix, and in legacy reports dating back to 2015. I am really concerned about Niamh’s mental health, and I remain completely convinced that Nicola’s only viable outcome would be a complete end to any workable relationship between Niamh and me. Nicola strongly controls all contact between us; she requests phone calls, but also claims that I have harassed her, so we ask her to email instead. She claims she only checks her email every few weeks, and rarely replies in a timely manner. Her emails have reverted to being abusive and angry, and whenever we make positive suggestions or ask her to support anything relating to Niamh, we get aggressive replies.

Her demonising of Ceirwen has got to the stage where I don’t believe it’s currently safe or practicable for Niamh to visit me at home, and I see no sign of this stopping. I believe that Niamh needs intervention from an independent support worker, not one who is simply fed Nicola’s narrative, but one who engages with both families and refers to the significant amount of information from previous social workers. Critically, I think Niamh needs help from Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services to come to terms with everything that has gone on in her life and help her find a way to build positive relationships. This can’t happen without Nicola’s consent, and I do not believe she would genuinely support this; rather she is likely to undermine it, even to the detriment of Niamh’s wellbeing and mental health, as long as it results in her “winning.”