

Open Letter to Lord Bellamy From Right to Equality

Dear Lord Bellamy,

We write on behalf of Right to Equality, a campaign group calling for legal reform to ensure gender equality and protection of women and children. Yesterday, we launched our [report](#) on **repealing the presumption of child contact** hosted by Kate Kniveton MP and Apsana Begum MP to a room of survivors, academics, lawyers and campaigners. We also heard from Dr Adrienne Barnett, Dr Charlotte Proudman (both Right to Equality directors of the campaign) and Claire Waxman OBE, London's Victims' Commissioner.

We extended multiple invitations to you and your office and were disappointed you did not attend, nor did a colleague in your absence. We know that the presumption of parental involvement with abusive parents causes harm - this is well established across research and survivor and child testimony. Indeed, it is clear from your own Ministry of Justice's Harm Report dated June 2020. Four years on, and your consultation on the presumption of contact still has not concluded.

We recently read about a family law case where a judge ordered child contact with a father who was convicted of raping a teenager, and he was found by the family court to have raped the child's mother. This is a father who is on the sex offender's register for life. In the judge's decision under the heading 'law', the presumption of parental involvement was one of the first pieces of legislation referred to. This statute is harming child and parent survivors.

We urge you to read our report calling for the repeal of the presumption of parental involvement in children's lives. [Australia](#) recently repealed a similar piece of legislation. Not only do our report findings support the need for legal change, but the voices of the survivors in attendance last night called for justice within the system through change. We wish you had been able to attend and hear directly from the survivors your office is meant to protect and support.

Our report is available online for the public to access; we hope you will take the time to read it. Our report was covered by [Sky News](#), the [Independent](#), and [Evening Standard](#). Kate Kniveton MP, Ambassador to Right to Equality's campaign, spoke bravely about her experiences of the family court and why the presumption needs to change urgently.

We produced our report while awaiting government follow-up on the Harm Report over the past four years. The serious harms the presumption has led to are outlined in detail, with the testimony of survivors central to the findings. We encourage you to direct your attention to the lived experience of those affected by these laws, truly consider their voices, and enact the change we are all calling for.

Sincerely,

Right to Equality