

## Successful Reunification of Child to his Parents Using the Resolutions Approach

Charlotte Worsley (Head of Team) instructed by Ramsdens Solicitors for the Mother and Natalia Perrett instructed by Ridley and Hall for the Father successfully reunited a 2 ½ year old child with his parents after a two-year fight. The child was represented by Victoria James through their Children's Guardian, instructed by Jordans Solicitors.

In September 2017 the child was presented to hospital with numerous injuries. At a finding of fact hearing the court found that the injuries were inflicted by either the mother or father (Re B (Children: Uncertain Perpetrator) [2019] EWCA Civ 575). Neither parent accepted perpetration of the injuries and after the findings were made maintained those denials. This was a single-issue case. The Local Authority approach to the parents in assessment was that the parents were unsafe to care for the child as they denied the findings of the court. As a result the LA deemed them to be unsafe or untreatable. The Local Authority sought permanent removal of the child from the parents' care.

The parents' legal teams persuaded the court to permit further assessment of the parents using the Resolutions Approach. The Resolution Approach specialises in working with parents that maintain denial of perpetration of injuries and examines the possibility of returning children to parents' care by relying on extensive family support networks to ensure that the child is not at risk.

The parents successfully engaged with the approach undertaking extensive assessment with Clinical Psychologist, Dr Gail Coleman-Oluwabusola working in conjunction with Professor John Gumbleton. This involved the parents' extended support network of family and friends. John Gumbleton in his article Rehabilitation – A Postcode Lottery (<https://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed1090>) sets out the Resolution Approach developed to provide risk assessments to the Court regarding the viability of rehabilitation where parental denial is a feature and the court makes a finding that the parents are in the pool of perpetrators. There are five questions that the court should consider,

1. Do the parents acknowledge that professionals have legitimate concerns given the medical evidence and any finding of the Court?
  2. Are they prepared to work in partnership with professionals in an open and honest manner?
  3. Are they willing to examine the way they care for their child and be willing to make changes to care routines in order to help ensure their child's safety?
  4. Are they willing to accept a high level of professional support and monitoring of their child's welfare?
  5. Is there a credible support network composed of safe extended family members or friends, who are willing and able to be involved in helping to ensure the child's future safety?
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If the answer to most or all of the above is yes Professor Gumbleton found that it is often possible to rehabilitate children safely even when the parents remain in denial.

In handing down Judgment the Judge commented that "this family could be a model example of what Resolutions can do for a family." All professionals supported the return of the child to the parents' long-term care and the court endorsed the Local Authority plans for a 12-month Supervision Order and Child in Need Plan.

Contact Charlotte, Natalia and Victoria's clerks

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