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Case No: BB17C00003

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
FAMILY DIVISION
SITTING AT MANCHESTER FAMILY COURT

Manchester Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M60 9DJ

Date: 31/05/2019

Start Time: 12.08 pm Finish Time: 13.47 pm

Before:

HIS HONOUR JUDGE BOOTH
(Sitting as a High Court Judge)

Between:

A LOCAL AUTHORITY	<u>Applicant</u>
- and -	
(1) MOTHER	
(2) FATHER	
(3) THE CHILDREN	<u>Respondents</u>
(Through their Children's Guardian)	

Approved Judgment

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HIS HONOUR JUDGE BOOTH :

1. These are care proceedings that have reached the stage of final hearing. I am concerned with four children. I am going to give this judgment in an anonymised form. The parents are not here to hear my judgment. The four children I am going to refer to by letters of the alphabet. The eldest, A, is almost 6. The second child, B, is 4 and there are twins, who I will refer to as C and D, who are 2 years of age.
2. The primary focus of the hearing and this judgment has been what happened to one of the twins, C, on 19th December 2017. As I will outline in due course, on that date C sustained a life-threatening head injury. When the case first came before me shortly following issue, her prospects looked bleak. I am happy to record that I was shown a video of her which shows remarkable progress given the extent of the injuries she sustained and the initial prognosis. It just goes to demonstrate the wonder of the plasticity of the juvenile brain. However, she will remain significantly disabled for the rest of her life. She will never be the little girl, the young woman, that she might otherwise have been. That is a tragedy.
3. Since the time of C's injury, all four children have been in the care of the local authority. The care plan put before me, the local authority having exhausted all the other potential options, is that the children should be adopted. To that end, the local authority has issued a placement application in which they invite me to dispense with the parents' consent to adoption on the basis that the welfare of the children requires it. The local authority's position is supported by the children's guardian.
4. Up until Wednesday of this week, this case was fully contested. On that day, in circumstances again I will elaborate on in due course, mother sought my permission not to be subjected to further cross-examination at a time when she was in the middle of her cross-examination by counsel for the local authority and father sought to be excused from giving evidence, both telling me that they now no longer sought to resist the outcome of the case and accepted that the inevitable conclusion was that their children would be made the subject of the orders sought by the local authority and would in due course be placed for adoption. Both asked to be excused from attendance today to listen to my judgment and I acceded to all those requests.

Background

5. Both parents are nationals of a European country and so are the children. The authorities of that country have been told of these proceedings and have asked to be informed of the decisions that I make but otherwise wish to play no part in the litigation. The father has lived in the UK since 2009, the mother since 2013. Their relationship developed quickly and mother became pregnant. She gave birth to A. She has said that she was determined to have her children in close proximity to one another and became pregnant again with B, who was born a little under 18 months after A.
6. The local authority became involved with the children. There were concerns about their development; not major concerns but enough for the local authority to feel that this family needed help.

7. In 2016 mother became pregnant again. She told me, and her medical records appear to bear this out, that even though she was carrying twins, she was unaware that she was pregnant. She was admitted to hospital for a planned operation for varicose veins. Whilst in hospital, she was examined, her pregnancy was identified and she immediately gave birth to the twins by C-section.
8. It is clear from everything I have read from that period that she had great difficulty coming to terms with the birth of two further children. At that stage the eldest of her children was 2 and she now had four very small children to look after. The twins were born prematurely at six months gestation. They were very small. It was suggested to mother during her evidence that that must have been a very challenging time for her. She accepted it was hard work but nothing more.
9. The parents have had a volatile relationship. I will need to consider in more detail the nature of their relationship but at times each have given very different accounts of what was going on in the household and who it was who was looking after the children and so on.
10. Two things are important to record at this stage. It was clear when the twins were small that they were not making the progress, either in their development or in their growth, that would have been expected and it was clear from professional observations that mother was having a difficult time providing the right level of emotional support that her children needed.
11. A psychological assessment carried out on the mother in pre-proceedings recorded her account of her childhood where her own mother had been distant and lacking in physical warmth, those being very much the sort of behaviours that the mother appeared to display towards her own children.
12. Intervention by the local authority and by the medical authorities resulted in some improvements, not least in the growth of the children but as at December 2017 the twins were still very small, wearing clothes for children up to 3 months and wearing nappies similarly sized.
13. By late 2017 the parents had separated. They had independent accommodation and because of an incident that led to the conviction of the father for assaulting the mother, there was a court order in place designed to keep them apart. Unbeknown to those who were assisting the family, in fact the parents had rekindled their relationship to such an extent that by December they were seeing one another almost daily. As well as having their clothes and equipment at their mother's home, all four children had clothes and some equipment at their father's home and from time to time the family had slept at father's home.

18th December 2017

14. What the evidence has revealed is that on 18th December at a time when the father was working a day-shift, mother and the children had been at his home. Mother had prepared a meal for the family and at about 6.45 in the evening, the father had arrived back at his house. The family stayed overnight at father's home. The elder child, A, slept upstairs with his father, the second child, B, slept downstairs with her mother and the twins slept in their cots. In the morning an arrangement was made for mother

to return to her home during the day of 19th December whilst father went to work. That is what happened.

The evening of the 19th December 2017

15. The events of the evening of 19th December have been analysed in detail. To establish timings and movements the police used a process known as triangulation to establish the whereabouts of mobile phones, and an analysis of the Wi-Fi router to show when a mobile phone has attached to the Wi-Fi.
16. Shortly before father left work at six o'clock in the evening, he called the mother. He then set off walking home. At 6.11 father received a phone call from the mother. At 6.16 the mother's telephone connected to the Wi-Fi at father's home. At 6.26 father was seen on CCTV pictures walking home. At 6.27, in a phone call that lasted just over three minutes, the mother telephoned the father. There was a further phone call a couple of minutes later from the father to the mother, a much shorter call.
17. At about 6.45, or shortly before, mother arrived at a walk-in medical centre not far from father's home. She had made a 112 phone call shortly before arriving. That phone call was carried on at the walk-in centre by the walk-in centre staff so that an ambulance was mobilised. Mother had child C with her who was very poorly.
18. How did it come about that C was in that condition? Only the parents know and, as I will find in due course, in truth only mother really knows.

Mother's explanation

19. Mother's explanation is that whilst she was at her home feeding the children and after she had fed C at a time when the twins were each in a highchair, C began to climb out of her highchair. The straps designed to restrain her were too big to hold her in and before mother had time to react, she says that C managed to push herself up with her arms, get on to her feet and topple out of the highchair, landing on her head on a laminated surface on top of a concrete floor. She was challenged on the basis that C was simply too weak and under-developed to manage this but mother stuck to her explanation.
20. Mother says that she did not initially realise the seriousness of the injury and expected C to recover. When that did not happen, she decided that she needed to go to father's house so that he could look after the other three children whilst she sought help for C. To that end, she dressed the children in their winter clothing it being, of course, December. She left her house with all four children, walking towards father's address. She says she telephoned father to alert him. She has varied in her accounts as to whether father was at his home when she arrived or not. Mother says that she handed over the care of the other three children to their father and decided to go to the walk-in medical centre.

Father's explanation

21. Father says that he received a first phone call from the mother whilst walking where nothing untoward appeared to have happened, nothing was mentioned. He then received what would have been the longer telephone call where he was told there had

been an accident and that C had fallen and that he began to run to his home. He says that when he arrived mother was there, that she immediately handed over the three children to him and set off to the medical centre. He says he had limited opportunity to observe C but could see that she was unwell.

The medical evidence

22. The medical evidence has not been disputed. I have reports from: Professor Fielder, ophthalmologist; Mr Richards, consultant paediatric neurosurgeon; Dr Hind, consultant paediatrician; and Professor Stivaros, consultant paediatric neuroradiologist. Following the delivery of their reports, there was an experts' meeting and I have the notes of that meeting which are agreed by the doctors and a schedule of agreement and disagreement.
23. C suffered the following injuries:
- a) Swelling to both sides of the brain but largely to the left side;
 - b) Hypoxic-ischaemic injury to both sides but most on the left;
 - c) Acute subdural haemorrhage caused by bleeding from a single cortical vein on the left side;
 - d) The subdural bleeding in combination with the brain swelling had caused increased intracranial pressure and caused the brain to deviate;
 - e) Subarachnoid haemorrhage.

She was found to have the following ophthalmic injuries: a few intra-retinal haemorrhages in the left eye; blot haemorrhage in the left eye; a blot haemorrhage in the left eye with central white dot; no retinal haemorrhages or other abnormality in the right eye.

24. The doctors were asked individually and collectively to consider how it might have been that those injuries were caused. A doctor cannot say how an injury was sustained. They rely, as do the treating clinicians, on the history provided by those who either saw or came upon the injured child. What they can express a view on is whether an injury is consistent with the explanation given by those who saw what happened and they can give a broad guide as to the type of forces required to produce particular injuries. As we do not experiment on children, those descriptions of potential force are based on clinical experience and on what are hoped to be reliable accounts of how particular injuries have occurred.
25. What the doctors were able to say in relation to C was that: first of all, the head injuries were the result of trauma; secondly, that the clinical findings were consistent with a single episode of trauma, although the possibility of multiple traumatic events could not be excluded; thirdly, the cause of the soft tissue swelling towards the top of her forehead was impact against an unyielding surface; fourthly, they were agreed that there was nothing to indicate that C's brain was unusually susceptible to injury.
26. They were asked to consider mother's explanation of a fall from a highchair. They agreed that an impact injury from a fall from a highchair was a plausible explanation

for all the head and eye injuries found in C. That came with the significant caveat, however, that if that explanation is what happened, then C had suffered a significant brain injury from a relatively innocuous trauma. They tell me that it would be very rare for injuries like C's to result from such an event and C would have to have been very unlucky. They agreed that the injuries of the severity that C suffered might be seen in a passenger travelling in a car that collided at 70 miles an hour causing them to bang their head.

27. They listed three factors that were supportive of mother's explanation:
- a) firstly, that there was a single bleeding point identified in neurosurgery;
 - b) secondly, the ophthalmic findings were more suggestive of accidental than inflicted trauma;
 - c) and, thirdly, there are recorded cases of low level falls causing significant head injuries.

They went on to identify two factors that would tend to favour a different explanation to that offered by C's mother, namely:

firstly, substantial brain swelling in the context of a low volume subdural haemorrhage;

secondly, events such as described by mother resulting in head injuries of the severity that C suffered are very rare.

The local authority case

28. The case advanced by the local authority is that the explanation given by C's mother of how C came to be injured is a lie and that she has lied because she inflicted an injury on C in circumstances that she will not reveal. Alternatively, if the injury was not an inflicted injury, then a different accident befell C which again C's mother has declined to describe. The local authority case is that whatever happened to C did not happen at mother's home but happened at father's home after mother and the children had arrived and occurred between the two phone calls from mother to father and that the explanation that C fell from a highchair is simply untenable as there were no highchairs at father's home. The local authority case is that it is of significant concern, and may have exacerbated C's condition, that neither parent called an ambulance at the first opportunity that each of them had. For mother, that would be immediately following the injury to C. For father, that would be the moment he arrived home.

The law

29. Before I go any further and consider in detail the contentious matters and the evidence I have heard, it might be helpful if I set out the law. Let me say straight away, I have had from the advocates first class written submissions on the law. I have read them more than once. I have considered everything they have put before me. I am going to give my own briefer summary and deal with some of the matters that more obviously arise when I get to the evidence.

30. The following points of law are relevant in this case:
- a) The burden of proof lies at all times with the local authority;
 - b) The standard of proof is the balance of probabilities;
 - c) A finding of fact must be based on evidence, including inferences that can properly be drawn from the evidence but not on suspicion or speculation;
 - d) When considering cases of suspected child abuse, the court must consider all the evidence and consider each piece of evidence in the context of all the other evidence. The court invariably surveys a wide canvas. A judge in these difficult cases must have regard to the relevance of each piece of evidence to the other evidence and to exercise an overview of the totality of the evidence to come to the conclusion of whether the case put forward by the local authority has been made out to the appropriate standard of proof;
 - e) The evidence of the parents and any other carers is of the utmost importance. It is essential that the court forms a clear assessment of their credibility and reliability;
 - f) It is common for witnesses in these cases to tell lies during the investigation and the hearing. The court must be careful to bear in mind that a witness may lie for many reasons, such as shame, misplaced loyalty, panic, fear, distress and maybe out of fear that the truth will not speak loud enough. The fact that a witness has lied about some matters does not mean that he or she has lied about everything;
 - g) The legal concept of proof on the balance of probabilities must be applied with common sense;
 - h) The court should have regard to the inherent probabilities. That does not affect the legal standard of proof;
 - i) The fact that the parents failed to prove on a balance of probabilities an affirmative case that they have chosen to set up by way of defence does not of itself establish the local authority's case;
 - j) Parents may in some respects be good parents. That does not necessarily mean that they are willing or able to protect their children in the way that might otherwise be expected;
 - k) Where repeated accounts are given of events, the court should think carefully about the significance or otherwise of reported discrepancies. They may arise for many different reasons, such as lies, faulty recollection, or contamination from other sources. They may simply be the effect of the human reaction of unconsciously filling in the gaps;
 - l) It is in the public interest that those who cause non-accidental injuries to children should be identified. The court should not "strain" the evidence to identify on a simple balance of probabilities the individual who inflicted the

injuries. If it is clear that identification of the perpetrator is not possible, the court should reach that conclusion;

- m) The court's function is to make the findings of fact that it is able on the evidence and then analyse those findings against the statutory formulation. The gloss imported by the use of unexplained legal, clinical, or colloquial terms is not helpful to that exercise. Where threshold is concerned, whether the objective standard of care which it will be reasonable to expect for the child in question has not been provided so that the harm suffered is attributable to the care actually provided.

31. I will, in due course, have to consider the impact of lies. As I will be finding, both parents have lied about important matters concerning them and their children. As emphasised by McFarlane LJ in *H-C (Children)* [2016] EWCA Civ 136, a central point in *R v Lucas* was that the lie is never taken as of itself as direct proof of guilt. The lie is capable of amounting to a corroboration. In *Lancashire County Council v C, M & F (Children; Fact-finding)* [2014] EWFC 3, Peter Jackson J set out some helpful observations on the way in which lies and discrepancies can pollute the evidence in the case in ways that may not be sinister.
32. Where a local authority asserts a case against a parent, the person accused must have the opportunity to answer the allegation and for the court to hear that answer so that it can make a determination. The court's assessment of the parents is at the heart of the process particularly where, as here, they were the ones caring for the children at the material time.

The parents

33. What did I make of the parents? I have had the advantage of case managing this case from the start. For a variety of reasons, I have had more hearings than would ordinarily be the case. The parents have given evidence to me, mother twice. I have struggled at times to understand the dynamic of their relationship. Mother has struck me throughout as someone with remarkable powers of self-control. She was able to give her evidence in English despite it being her second language. She did that very determinedly, having the services of someone to translate for her available throughout but seldom requiring assistance. She gave her evidence unemotionally. She has been calm and given nothing away throughout the court process.
34. She is clearly a hardworking, young woman. She was described by the father as a good mother. The photographs of her home taken shortly following the admission of C to hospital show a clean and tidy home with everything in its place.
35. She is inevitably a product of her background. I have described earlier her own description of her relationship with her mother. That led, in part, to her determination to start a new life in a new country where she thought there were better opportunities for her. It is of note that she wishes the children to have little contact with their heritage and wants them to be brought up as English children speaking English. She is clearly a woman of intelligence.
36. The father is a completely different character. He appears more emotional. He has at times, as the mother has described, struggled to toe the party line that they have

established between them. He has described himself as being dreadfully upset by the events concerning C and his separation from the children. That said, he has chosen not to avail himself of contact with the children for the last six months. In my judgment, he is no intellectual match for the mother.

37. He too is a hardworking man. Although he has had periods of unemployment, he seems able to find himself new work through an agency consisting of unskilled work in the agricultural sector or in the industrial sector. One of the delays in this case was caused when he suffered an industrial accident when working as a cleaner. I was due to hear evidence from him when he failed to attend. I had grave suspicions that his non-attendance at court was deliberate as he knew he was to be questioned about things he had said which would cause difficulties for both him and the mother. I am satisfied from what I have been told that my suspicions were ill-founded.
38. During the case, and indeed beforehand, each of the parents has made serious allegations against the other at a time when they have fallen out. Despite that, they have reconciled. When they have reconciled, they have both taken the decision to keep the fact of their reconciliation from the local authority and, indeed, their own lawyers. After mother first gave evidence, she did reveal to her leading counsel that she had not been honest with the court and had failed to disclose that she and the father were in a relationship. That led to the case being reconvened with the expectation that both parents would give evidence for a second time but before that could happen, there was a further falling out between the parents.
39. Father then revealed to an interpreter in text messages that mother had given him a different explanation of how the accident happened. He said he told mother when they fell out that he would tell. It is his case that mother then reported him to the police, making an allegation that he understood to be one of rape. What father wrote was this:

“We will never be together as she told me a while ago that she pushed my daughter at my house and she [C] hit her head against the fireplace but that she [mother] never wanted that as if she were scared to tell at first.”

40. That evidence from father threw light on something he had said when he gave his evidence when the case was proceeding in October when he was being asked about mother’s account of the accident and his understanding of what had happened. He volunteered:

“I had fireplace with tiles that were removed after accident.”

The context in which he said that was that he explained he understood that the accident had happened at his house. He understood that from the phone call and he accepted that there was no highchair at his house.

Developments this hearing

41. The case was listed this week for a further attempt for both parents to give evidence. At a Directions hearing ahead of today, I had expressed my view on the evidence I had heard to date that it was clear to me that the accident had not happened at

mother's home as she had suggested. The purpose of my saying what I did was to give mother the space to reconsider her evidence and tell me the truth. She stuck to her original story.

42. She was asked about her relationship with the father, who had not attended court, and she gave evidence that they had started to communicate with one another by Facebook, had had a few contacts and had met up. She was asked if those messages could be seen and she produced her telephone.
43. The messages between the parents were translated and transcribed. They showed a rather different picture from that conveyed by mother: much more frequent contact than she was describing and a relationship that in large measure had been rekindled. The messages from father appeared to me to show a man besotted with mother. The messages also appeared to show mother keeping father at a little bit of a distance.

Conclusions about the parents

44. So what conclusion do I draw about their relationship? They are clearly enmeshed with one another. The relationship is volatile. I cannot rely on the accuracy of either describing to me the things that have happened in their relationship. I have no doubt that there has been some domestic violence. I would not go behind the conviction of the father but it is clear to me that the mother is able to exercise a significant degree of control over the father and by that, I mean emotional control.

Events at the hospital

45. The significance of that relates to what happened in the immediate aftermath of C's admission to hospital. There was text communication between the parents. It began at something like quarter to one in the morning when mother was at hospital and father was at home with the three children. Translated, mother sent a text message to father as follows:

"I had police. They have to be sure that all the children are safe. I gave your address. Please, please, please do not open the doors. They said if no answer they will not wake you up. I told them that children are at cousin. Please do not open."

Father immediately responded, "They know I am living here". The next message from mother reads as follows:

"Please do not open the doors. If something this accident happened in my house."

The next message, mother to father, "She fell out of the chair". The next message from mother to father, "Please". The next message from mother to father, "Do not open the door".

46. What was mother saying in those messages? Mother says she was merely giving father an account, albeit in brief form, of what had happened to C because they had barely had an opportunity to talk when they met as father returned to his house and she had left with C.

47. The reference to the cousin was a reference to someone called Beatrise. In fact, earlier in the evening whilst she was at hospital mother had changed the identity of the phone number that was father's mobile number to that of "Beatrise".
48. The local authority is clear on the significance of what mother said and what she did. Mother by then had given an explanation that C had fallen from a highchair. She knew perfectly well there was no highchair at father's address. A visit by the police to father's home would have revealed the flaw in mother's explanation.

Has the local authority made out its case?

49. What did happen to C? What can I rely on? What is the evidence that tells me whether the local authority have made out their case or not? What inferences can I draw and what conclusions should I reach?
50. I have already indicated that I cannot rely on the accuracy of the evidence mother gave me. The police analysis of the movements of the parents appears to me to be accurate and reliable. Some adjustments were necessary as to timings because of differences on phones and other devices. They were explained in a way that made perfect sense to me. Of the two, father is the most reliable but his evidence comes with this enormous caveat that he cannot stick to a straight story. He is emotionally enmeshed with mother and unless he is speaking at a time when they are estranged, his evidence is unlikely to be reliable.
51. The picture is clear that at the time of the incident, although they were maintaining separate households the couple were effectively living together between the two houses. The photographs taken of mother's home are inconsistent with someone leaving home distressed and in a panic as she claimed. The house is too tidy, everything is put away, rubbish had been cleared and so on. All that points to her leaving her house with the children in a calm and collected way. She arrived at father's home and then rang him. The likely purpose of that call was to alert him to the fact that she was at his home. The second longer call that followed was, in my judgment, likely to be the call when she alerted father to the fact that something had happened to C. On that analysis, C did not fall from a highchair.
52. Father gave an explanation in the text message I have quoted that came from mother that might explain the injury and would be entirely consistent with the medical evidence, namely that C's head came into contact with a tiled fireplace. That explanation offered by father after he had given his evidence, when combined with his volunteered evidence months before that he had had the fireplace re-tiled or removed, would be of apiece with the explanation he gave that he said mother told him.
53. Mother denied that that is what had happened.
54. The alternative is that something else happened about which I have not heard, a different accident that brought C's head into contact with an unyielding surface with considerable force. If it were the case that an accident occurred, why is it mother has given what I find to be a false explanation? If it were a dreadful accident, why has she not somewhere along the way given that explanation?

55. I am cautioned on mother's behalf in respect of two things: firstly, placing any or any significant reliance on the demeanour of mother or father when they gave their evidence; and, secondly, on drawing inferences to arrive at an explanation that better fits with the rest of the evidence. For example, it is said that it is all too easy for the court to look at a young mother with four very young children, to assume that she has lost her temper and behaved in a way that she now regrets but cannot bring herself to accept what she has done.
56. I have no way of knowing with precision what happened in father's house in the relatively few minutes that mother was there before she called father to tell him that C had had a fall. She had arrived with four children. They would all have been in their winter clothes, having walked from mother's home.
57. The local authority say that I should rely on mother's repeated lies to corroborate the rest of the evidence and conclude that she has lied because she is hiding or attempting to hide the truth and, further, I should draw an adverse inference from her decision to seek my permission to withdraw from giving evidence, when the true state of her current relationship with father was revealed in the social media messages and to infer that this is yet another part of her dishonesty in covering up for herself and her responsibility for what happened to C.
58. I go back to my observations of what I made of the mother. She is an intelligent woman. She is capable of great self-control. That does not mean that she is incapable of losing control. I am satisfied that whatever happened to C in the minutes before the phone call to father to tell him that she had had a fall, that she was injured by something done to her by her mother. It may be that her mother pushed her so that her head hit against the fireplace. I cannot make a positive finding to that effect. There is no scientific evidence to support that but it is plausible.
59. I am satisfied that had this been an accident, that this mother would at some stage during the course of these proceedings have told me that. It would have been obvious to her when the evidence was put before the court in October last year from the police witnesses of how her movements could be tracked, that that was evidence I was likely to accept as accurate. To remove any doubt from her mind, I made that explicitly clear to her.
60. I need to understand why it was that at a time when she should have been concerned about the survival of her daughter, she had the presence of mind to start to alter her mobile phone to delete the reference to father and substitute it with the name of her cousin. I need to understand why she was giving father a script as to how the accident happened, which I am satisfied for the reasons I have explained, she knew was false. She has shown through the evidence she has repeatedly given about her relationship with father that she can lie, even when there is every likelihood she will be caught out. Her demeanour tells me nothing.

Conclusion

61. The evidence points as clearly as can be to this mother behaving in such a way that C sustained an injury to her head by something that was not an accident.

62. I am equally satisfied that mother could and should have telephoned 999 immediately the injury occurred. She gave explanations about lack of response for ambulances in her home country but that simply did not stand up to scrutiny. She knew full well that she should have been ringing 999. Father is also at fault for not calling 999. I know why he would not do so - mother was in charge. That is not an acceptable explanation.
63. I therefore make the findings numbered 1 through to 21.

The welfare of the children

64. I will then move on to the welfare stage, the threshold for the making of public law orders having been crossed.
65. Efforts have been made to find family members who might be able to care for these children. That search has included in the parents' home country. Those efforts have come to nought. I am satisfied that the local authority care plan, the children should be placed for adoption, is the only viable option. There is no question of children of these ages spending the rest of their childhood in foster care if that can be avoided.
66. As far as C is concerned, the search for an adoptive placement may be challenging but she is clearly a very attractive child, a very personable child, who I imagine would be a joy to someone with the appropriate skills to look after her. The plan is for the other three children to be placed as a sibling group. Every effort should be made for that to be achieved.

The placement application

67. I must consider the placement application. Again, it is supported by the children's guardian and not opposed by the parents.
68. I have no doubt that I must dispense with the parents' consent so that these children can be placed for adoption, their welfare requiring it.
69. That is my judgment.

(This Judgment has been approved by the Judge.)