

Essex County Council
Schools, Children & Families Directorate
PO Box 47, County Hall
Chelmsford, Essex
CM1 1YS

Ms Sophie Rises
request-59899-759f1ade@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: ECC-009652-11

Your ref: N/a

Date: 01 March 2011

Dear Ms Rises

Thank you for your request for information received on 26 January 2011. We offer our apologies again for the delay in providing you with this response.

Your questions were:

A. Please could you tell me since 1 April 2009 how many applications for a s34.4 Order you have made?

We have been involved in six cases under s34 but have only applied for one s34(4) order.

B. Of those cases identified in question A. how many 'statement of expectations for contact' have you written and sent to the client?

This information is not routinely recorded on our Social Care system.

C. Of those cases identified in question B please could you state which statements you include in your 'statement of expectations for contact' from the following statements:

The Local authority expects:

1. (the parent); to come to contact alone, to wait in reception until a worker arrives to take her to the contact room. If another person or child is present, they will be immediately asked to leave or the contact will not take place, and the children will be returned to the placement without having seen Ms Rises or any other adult or child, or being involved in those negotiations.
2. Not to talk to the children about care proceedings, not to share court papers, not to disclose forthcoming dates;
3. Not to talk to the children about the allegations made about their care contained in the Guardian report,
4. To tell the children they will be remaining in the local authority care until the judge decides but without giving them any suggested timescales or dates,

Contd/....

5. To tell the children about her own difficulties, stresses, negative emotions but to offer them positive reassurances that she remains their loving mother,
6. To allow (older children) to visit the toilet facilities alone during contact and if (toddler) goes to the toilet the door can be shut but must not be locked,
7. Not to take or allow photographs to be taken during contact, unless agreed and taken by the contact supervisor. (the parent) will be given copies.
8. Not to disclose any information or pictures regarding the children on social web networking sites or media,
9. Not to comment negatively regarding the children's clothes,
10. Not to share texts with the children or put them on the phone to anybody,
11. To intervene as appropriate in ensuring the physical safety during contact, and to act upon the guidance of the contact supervisors,
12. To say appropriate goodbyes with a kiss and a cuddle without showing the children she is distressed at the end of contact (this means no tears, no telling the children she is doing everything she can to get them back, no hanging on to them). If the supervisor says the goodbye is going on too long, they will take the children and leave contact.
13. To continue to leave the contact venue prior to the children leaving and to drive away and not wait outside for them to emerge,
14. Not to go to the home of (the foster carer) or the vicinity of her address;
15. Not to attend (the children's) school or any other venue where she believes the children might be without prior agreement of the local authority;
16. (the parent) and contact supervisors will respect each other's personal space;
17. There will be no discussions during contact about the wider issues; These expectations will be continually reviewed and updated. The Local authority have the right to bring contact to an end and/or to suspend contact for up to 7 days. If these expectations are not met the local authority will;
 - A. End any contact session immediately, and return the children to their placement.
 - B. Give further consideration to seeking a s34.4 Order to remove the duty to promote contact."

This information is not routinely recorded on our Social Care system.

- D. Since April 2009 Please could you state how many s34.4 Orders were made due to:**
1. Failing to comply with the statement of expectations.
 2. Alleged assault of the children in contact (no evidence but finding of fact by Judge based on balance of probability i.e. hearsay of social worker)
 3. Assault of children in contact based on firm evidence (doctor's report, police conviction, video evidence).

This information is not routinely recorded on our Social Care system.

- E. Of all families subject to care proceedings since 1 April 2009 how many have unsupervised contact?**

This information is not recorded in an easily accessible format.

F. Of those cases identified in question A, please state how many of the care proceedings resulted in:

- 1. A s31 Order.**
- 2. An adoption Order**
- 3. A Special Guardianship Order**
- 4. Return of the children to the parent.**

We have had one s31 order made in the s34 proceedings and this was a supervision order, and one return of the child to a parent (same case). Two cases are ongoing. All six cases relate to cases where there had been previous proceedings and we are only specifying the answer in relation to the s34 proceedings.

G. Of those cases identified in question F as being permanently removed from the parent's care, please state how many had made a complaint to the Local Authority complaints department prior to the making of the s34.4 Order.

None.

With regard to questions B to G of your request, we can confirm that we do hold this information. However from our preliminary assessment, we estimate that compliance with your request would exceed the appropriate costs limit under section 12 of the Freedom of information Act 2000. This is currently £450. This limit is calculated on 18 hours of work at a cost of £25 per hour. The information you have requested is not available because the information you have requested is not routinely recorded on our Social Care system and would require a manual trawl through over 1000 Social Care records. Care proceedings are not recorded on our Social Care system. Contact type received is also not routinely recorded by child in a formal way that can be reported upon.

Please contact me if you would like further advice or assistance about your request or your right to access information held by Essex County Council.

If you are not satisfied with my response to your request, please let me know. If I am unable to resolve the issue immediately, I will explain our complaints procedure.

If you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Telephone: 08456 30 60 60 or 01625 54 57 45 Website: www.ico.gov.uk

There is no charge for making an appeal.

Yours sincerely

Lauri Almond

Information Governance Officer

Schools, Children and Families

Essex County Council

Telephone: 08457 430430

Email: yourrighttoknow@essex.gov.uk