

IN THE BRISTOL FAMILY COURT

Bristol Civil and Family Justice Centre

Date: 15/06/2015

Before:

HIS HONOUR JUDGE WILDBLOOD QC sitting as a Judge of High Court.

Between:

	Roger Williams	<u>Applicant</u>
	- and -	
	Rebecca Minnock	<u>First Respondent</u>
	-and-	
	Ethan Freeman Williams (by his guardian)	<u>Second Respondent</u>

**Judi Evans for the mother.
Rupert Chapman for the father
Simon Hutchence for the child.**

Hearing date: 15th June 2015

HHJ Wildblood QC:

1. This morning I stated that I would release judgments to the press to explain what is happening in this case. It is agreed that I should release this short judgment to explain where matters go from here. I will only refer to the matters of significance.
2. The child arrangement orders (which have been called ‘custody orders’ in some newspapers) made by the District Judge bore a warning that included these words: *‘if you do not comply with a provision of this child arrangements order – a) you may be held in contempt of court and be committed to prison or fined; and/or b) the court may make an order requiring you to undertake unpaid work (‘an enforcement order’) and/or an order that you pay financial compensation’*. The father and the guardian will decide by 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday 17th June 2015 whether either of them wishes to bring contempt proceedings against the mother and, if so, will issue notices to that effect by 4.30 on Thursday, 18th June 2015. I will also give further consideration to this issue of contempt once the parties have decided upon the positions that they take; I think that the father, in particular, has a right to reflect on this. It is not an issue that has simply gone away and there needs to be a very clear message that parties cannot behave in the way that this mother has behaved.
3. There will be a hearing on 26th June 2015 in private to decide: a) the interim arrangements for the mother’s contact; b) the arrangements that should be made for the listing in open court of any contempt application concerning the mother and c) directions for the future conduct of the case.
4. The guardian has agreed to speak to the Local Authority and to meet with the mother tomorrow to discuss the arrangements that should be made for contact. If contact during the period between now and the 26th June can be agreed then it will take place; if not I will hold a private hearing by telephone to resolve that very limited issue. Telephone hearings are a useful way of limiting legal costs. That means that over the next 11 days there will be limited contact between the mother and Ethan but that is only a temporary arrangement whilst matters settle down and people take stock of the current position.
5. The father’s barrister will draft a proposed injunction to define what may be said now in public about the case. Notice to all involved parties will be given once that injunction is issued. However, it will not alter what I have said today (and it is important that the press understands that, so that they are clear about what they may and may not publish). I have already made it plain that details that have already been given in open court (and any existing photographs that have been put into the public domain) may be publicised and referred to in the

future. The judgment that I gave earlier today sets out the position. If there is any doubt, an application should be made to me for directions.

6. There will be a prohibited steps order, bearing a penal notice, directing that Ethan must not be removed from the care of the father. The collection orders will be discharged (since they are now redundant).
7. Finally, I have given permission for the father to issue the attached statement.

Statement by Roger Williams

I am hugely relieved and grateful that Ethan has been returned safely and is now able to resume a calm, normal daily routine. The last few weeks and months have been a time of immense anxiety and distress for Ethan and for me and my family.

I am very grateful to the authorities, the Family Court, my legal advisers and members of the press for the hard work that has gone into ensuring this situation is resolved in Ethan's best interests.

My primary focus is on Ethan and his wellbeing and I would ask that the matters that remain to be addressed are considered in a calmer atmosphere and without the glare of the media.