

Call to investigate adoption service

A CALL for an immediate investigation into the award-winning Essex county adoption service was made this week by Cllr Paul Stumpf, Labour group leader on the Conservative controlled county council.

He spoke out after a national newspaper highlighted a number of cases involving Essex Social Services, in which, it was claimed, children were taken away and adopted quickly before their parents could make a case to keep them.

One case cited involved an Essex couple whose baby son was removed after he was taken to hospital with a lump on the head which turned out to be a skull fracture.

Both parents insist they did not cause the injury and believe they now have medical evidence to prove it.

But the court had already given permission for adoption. Their MP, Alan Hurst, who is also a solicitor, said the case raised a number of general human rights issues.

Very concerned

Chris Smith of Parents Against Injustice (PAIN) said he knew of similar cases in Essex.

Cllr Stumpf said: "I am very concerned about some of the issues raised, and have taken immediate steps to get to the bottom of the situation."

He wants an urgent meeting with council chief officers. The county council issued a statement saying it was proud of its record on adoption.

It added: "It is important to stress that neither the county council nor any individual social worker determines whether there is sufficient evidence to remove a child from its parents' care and for her/him to be legally adopted. This is a matter for the court.

"These decisions are not taken lightly and Essex County Council would only recommend a child's adoption against parental wishes if there were compelling reasons of child welfare for so doing."

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