

DAILY MAIL Wednesday 21/11/07

Mother-to-be flees as social workers warn her they will take her baby away at birth

By PAUL SIMS - [More by this author »](#) Last updated at 08:47am on 21st November 2007

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A mother-to-be has fled her home after social workers threatened to take her baby within minutes of the birth.

Fran Lyon, 22, hopes a new local authority will take a different approach.

She insists that the mental health problems she had as a teenager - she started self-harming at 15 and has been treated at psychiatric hospitals for borderline personality disorder - are now behind her and there is no evidence she will harm her child.

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Waiting: Fran Lyon has named her baby Molly

Miss Lyon moved out of Hexham after receiving a copy of her "birth plan" from social services at Northumberland County Council.

It says she will be given a maximum of 15 minutes with her baby - who she has already named Molly - before she is taken into care.

She is now in the Birmingham Yardley constituency of Liberal Democrat MP John Hemming, who has taken up her case and is campaigning to overturn the decision.

Miss Lyon said she had been hounded out of her home by a "barbaric" decision and felt she had no choice but to move if she is to have any chance of keeping her baby.



Waiting: Fran Lyon has named her baby Molly

She added: "It is a sad indictment of a local authority in the way they have dealt with an expectant mother who has tried to co-operate with some of the most extreme measures imaginable."

Miss Lyon said social workers fear she is likely to develop Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. The controversial condition is said to lead mothers to seek attention by harming their child or claiming it is ill.

"I have been told that I am not even to breastfeed my child in case I try to poison her," she said.

"As far as I am concerned, the birth plan is abusive and I will just not stand for it. It would leave Molly isolated from anybody who loves her from the first few minutes of her life. It is barbaric and it deprives her of a basic right."

She hopes Birmingham City Council will review the case, but admitted: "I don't know what's going to happen. It's a waiting game at the moment."

Miss Lyon became involved with social services in July after a domestic incident involving her former partner.

At a subsequent meeting, she revealed her history of mental health problems and was told they would be taking action to remove her child once she is born in January.

Munchausen's - first identified by Sir Roy Meadow during the 1970s - has been at the heart of a series of miscarriages of justice.

Sir Roy was responsible for evidence that led to the wrongful convictions of Angela Cannings and Sally Clark for murdering their children. Mrs Clark died earlier this year.

Miss Lyon has appealed for a place in a mother and baby unit so she can look after her child under supervision.

Northumberland County Council said last night: "Where a child or unborn baby is subject to a child protection plan and they move to another local authority area, responsibility would normally pass to the new authority.

"A transfer conference is arranged as soon as possible and the family and their support are usually invited to attend. The existing plan is discussed, but the new authority makes its own decisions about how to proceed.

"Northumberland County Council would make sure the new authority has all the relevant information it needs to make informed decisions."

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John Hemming: Fight to overturn decision

Mr Hemming is chairman of the Justice for Families organisation and believes councils are now taking more babies to meet Government adoption targets.

He said of Miss Lyon's case: "What could be more traumatic than for a mother to have her baby taken away at birth? It's monstrous.

"That, in itself, can cause mental health problems which are then used by social services against the mother as a reason not to return the baby. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"There has been a massive increase in younger babies being taken into care before there is even any evidence of harm."

The MP, married with four children, made headlines in 2005 when he fathered a love child after a six-year affair with his personal assistant.

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Social services are quick to pick on past problems but miss so many obvious cases of child abuse, until it is too late as to be ignored as "Incompetent" and intrusive state nannies.

- Frank Jury, Kidderminster Worcs

Well done Fran Lyon for standing up to the petty beurocrats who work in Social Services, and who think they can play God in the life of a child. Fight for your baby and do not be dictated to by people who have no love for your little one, only a desire to dominate. There are far too many children taken away needlessly from their parents, and then moved from foster family to foster family, never being allowed to form the loving attachments they so badly need.

- J Yusef, Brighton UK

Another case of common sense defeated by our incompetent authoritarian system. Hate to say it but I suggest Ms.Lyons move abroad, like a lot of us are now.

- Ian, Thundersley, UK