

From The Sunday Times
September 6, 2009

Question a doctor and lose your child

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/health/article6823345.ece



Ashleigh Cave lost the use of her legs after a vaccination

Daniel Foggo

PARENTS are being threatened with having their children taken into care after questioning doctors' diagnoses or objecting to their medical care.

John Hemming, a Liberal Democrat MP, who campaigns to stop injustices in the family court, said: "Very often care proceedings are used as retaliation by local authorities against 'uppity' people who question the system."

Cases are emerging across the UK:

The mother of a 13-year-old girl who became partly paralysed after being given a cervical cancer vaccination says social workers have told her the child may be removed if she (the mother) continues to link her condition with the vaccination.

Related Links

- [Edlington and Baby P become election issues](#)
- [More abused children need to be taken into care](#)

A couple had all six of their children removed from their care after they disputed the necessity of an invasive medical test on their eldest daughter. Doctors, who suspected she might have had a blood disease, called for social services to obtain an emergency protection order, although it was subsequently confirmed that she was not suffering from the condition. The parents were still considered unstable, and all their children were taken from them.

A single mother whose teenage son is terminally ill and confined to a wheelchair has been told he is to become the subject of a care order after she complained that her local authority's failure to provide bathroom facilities for him has left her struggling to maintain sanitary standards.

In the first of those cases, Ashleigh Cave, 13, from Liverpool, began experiencing severe headaches and dizziness half an hour after being inoculated last October with Cervarix, which guards against girls contracting the human papilloma virus.

The schoolgirl was soon collapsing repeatedly; she lost the use of her legs and was admitted to Alder Hey children's hospital. Nearly 11 months later she is still in hospital and is unable to stand or walk unaided. Her mother, Cheryl, has now been told that doctors believe her condition must be psychosomatic.

"The hospital brought in social workers from the local authority who have told me they are considering putting Ashleigh on an at-risk register," Cheryl Cave said. She is convinced her daughter's paralysis was caused by the vaccination.

Cave said that a social worker from Sefton council said she suspected her of having Munchausen's syndrome by proxy or factitious illness syndrome — controversial conditions in which mothers are said to attribute illnesses falsely to their children in order to gain attention.

Cave said: "The social worker said I should stop believing the injection has anything to do with Ashleigh's condition because I am putting my thoughts on to her and stopping her getting well.

"Since Ashleigh was in hospital she has become incontinent and had double kidney infections and chest infections. Have I made all these up?"

In the third of these cases, Melvilina Gavin-Langley's 16-year-old son Omar is terminally ill with Duchenne muscular dystrophy and restricted to a wheelchair.

His mother is embroiled in a legal dispute with Birmingham city council over a partly completed extension intended to provide Omar with easy access to a bathroom.

Gavin-Langley, 49, who wants the extension rebuilt because she says it was designed in a way that was dangerous and obstructed access to sewers, said: "I have had to carry Omar upstairs to bathe him but it was risking dislocating his shoulders and also I got a hernia from all the lifting.

"I told the council I could no longer lift Omar across my back.

"They then turned that around and said I had said I could no longer care for my son. They say they have to put him into care because his hair has not been washed and he's not getting a bath. They have just threatened me with this because they don't like me taking legal action against them."

A spokesman for Birmingham city council confirmed the council was seeking an interim care order but said social workers wanted Omar to remain with his mother.

Sefton council did not comment on the Ashleigh Cave case.