

Mother of baby with Down's condemns French for cruelty

France

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A heartfelt internet rallying cry from the mother of a baby with Down's syndrome has been embraced by mothers across France whose babies have been the victims of prejudice.

Caroline Boudet, from Normandy, has become a figurehead after posting a message on Facebook to complain at the hurtful comments made by people, including doctors, who describe Louise, her daughter, as a "Down's baby".

"She is my daughter, Louise, who is four months old, has two arms, two legs, two good, round cheeks and an extra chromosome," she wrote. Down's syndrome, she went on, is "not what she IS, it is what she HAS. You would not talk about a little cancer baby."

Her piece has gone viral, having been shared 30,000 times on Facebook and picked up by media outlets in France and abroad.

Mrs Boudet, who thought that her words would be read by no more than a few dozen friends and acquaintances, has been inundated by messages



Down's is what Louise has, not what she is, her mother said on Facebook

of support from people all over France.

"It's unbelievable," she said, adding that several editors had contacted her to write a book about her experience.

Mrs Boudet wrote her text on Monday after taking her daughter to see a doctor who repeatedly called her "a little Down's baby".

"I know that when you're not living it yourself, you don't think about this sort of thing, but words count," she wrote. "They can help or hurt. So take a little second to think about it."

She has advice for those who may

meet her daughter. "Don't ask her mother, 'It wasn't detected during your pregnancy?' Either it was and the decision to keep the child is assumed, or it wasn't, and the surprise was big enough not to rub it in.

"What is more, all mothers have an unfortunate tendency to feel guilty about anything and everything, so you can imagine what it's like with an extra chromosome that wasn't spotted."

She goes on: "Don't say to the mother, 'It's your baby despite everything'. No, it's my baby, full stop. Don't say 'They [people with Down's syndrome] are like this, they are like that'. No, 'they' all have their personalities, their appearances, their tastes, their journeys. 'They' are as different from each other as you are from your neighbour."

Mrs Boudet, who also has a four-year-old son, said she hoped that her message would help to curtail discrimination in France.

"Things are better than they used to be, but there is still a lot to be done. France is not very advanced in the way it considers Down's syndrome and disability in general," she added.

Times June 12 2015