

Appeal court blocks abortion for woman with mental age of nine

By Victoria Ward

THE Court of Appeal has blocked a mentally ill woman's abortion after the Catholic Church warned it would infringe her human rights.

Three senior judges yesterday overturned a ruling made on Friday that the woman, who is in her 20s and is 22 weeks pregnant, should have a termination against her wishes because it was in her best interests.

The woman's mother, who is Catholic and a midwife, brought the challenge after arguing that she would look after the baby. After the original decision, doctors told the woman she would go to sleep and when she woke up the "baby would no longer be in her tummy but she would get a new doll".

However, the woman, who has a mental age of between six and nine, will now be allowed to continue with

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the pregnancy. The appeal judges said they would provide their reasons for overturning the ruling at a later date.

The NHS trust responsible for the woman's care had asked for the court's permission to terminate the pregnancy. Three specialists - an obstetrician and two psychiatrists - argued that there was a risk to her psychiatric health if the pregnancy continued and said her behaviour could pose a risk to a baby.

They also said that taking a baby from her would cause greater psychiatric harm than terminating the pregnancy.

Lawyers representing the woman, who has a "moderately severe" learning disability and mood disorder, said she should be allowed to give birth.

The court heard that the "circumstances of the conception" were "unclear" and that a police investigation was ongoing.

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