

Mother appeals after daughter is ordered to have an abortion

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The mother of a mentally ill Roman Catholic woman who has been ordered by a court to have an abortion has begun an urgent appeal against the ruling.

Three judges in the Court of Appeal were asked yesterday to consider what is thought to be the first order of its kind in a British court. The appeal was launched in response to an order made on Friday by Mrs Justice Lieven, who

concluded that a termination was in the pregnant woman's best interests.

The judge heard evidence at the court of protection in London, where issues relating to people who lack the mental capacity to make decisions are considered. Senior officials at an NHS trust responsible for the woman's care had asked Mrs Justice Lieven to let doctors perform an abortion.

A specialist obstetrician and two psychiatrists were asked to assess the health of the pregnant woman, who is in her twenties. They reported to the

court that a termination was the best option because of the risk to the woman's psychiatric health if the pregnancy continued.

They said that her behaviour could pose a risk to a baby, and added that taking a baby from the woman would cause greater psychiatric harm than terminating the pregnancy.

However, the woman's mother, a former midwife, objected to the termination and has told the court that she could care for the child.

The case has prompted objections

from religious leaders and other campaigners. Bishop John Sherrington, the Roman Catholic auxiliary bishop of Westminster, said: "Forcing a woman to have an abortion against her will, and that of her close family, infringes her human rights, not to mention the right of her unborn child to life in a family that has committed to caring for this child."

"In a free society like ours there is a delicate balance between the rights of the individual and the powers of the state. This case, for which all the information is not available, raises serious

questions about the meaning of best interests when a patient lacks mental capacity and is subject to the court's decision against her will."

Peter Lynas, from the group Evangelical Alliance, said: "The judge does not appear to have considered the trauma of a forced abortion, the loss of life to the unborn child and the significant long-term consequences for the family of this decision."

"Pregnancy is being presented as a problem and termination is being presented as the expedient solution."

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