

"An MSBP Case in the London Borough of Barnet"

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By Linda Geddes

A MOTHER of two who almost lost her children to Barnet social services could trigger a review of five thousand child protection cases nationwide. Jan Loxley-Blount, 53, of Finchley Central, almost lost David, 14, and Helen 9, when social services misdiagnosed her son's autism and accused her of child abuse.

She wrote to MPs including Childrens' Minister Margaret Hodge in 2000, warning them children were being wrongly removed from their families on the basis of a diagnosis by Professor Sir Roy Meadow. He is currently being investigated by the GMC after several convictions of mothers killing their babies were overturned. She said: "The whole national political debate has been sparked by what Barnet did to David."

"You think if those people hadn't got up my nose, when Sally Clark brought the Meadows thing to light, would anyone have been in a position to do anything about it?"

Barnet social services were following national guidelines on how to recognise Munchausen's syndrome by proxy - the theory mothers may deliberately harm their children to attract attention - when they put David and Helen on the at risk register.

Mrs Loxley-Blount, a former government adviser on childcare, said: "It all started when David was three. I knew there was something wrong with him because he wasn't coping at playgroup. He would talk to you, but not make eye-contact.

The doctor accused her of being an over-anxious parent and refused to do any tests.

She later discovered David's lack of eye-contact was a classic sign of Autism. It was also a possible symptom of abuse. When David fell ill with chronic fatigue syndrome in 1998, social services were called in to investigate the amount of school he was missing. When she refused to co-operate she was told her children would be taken away.

She said: "The biggest problem was the disruption to Helen's social life. Once I was accused of child abuse very few parents would let their children play with her - those feelings of being shunned have stuck."

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