

## Further investigations are planned for child whose mother took him into hiding to avoid treatment

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The mother of a 7 year old boy who sparked a High Court action when she refused to allow him to have radiotherapy after surgery for a brain tumour has said that she will allow the treatment if his cancer has returned.

Sally Roberts, a New Zealander who was living in Devon, went into hiding with her son Neon, triggering a nationwide search before they were found in Sussex. Doctors said that he should have chemotherapy and radiotherapy after removal of the medulloblastoma six weeks ago.

The case went to the High Court in London because Roberts and her husband, Ben, could not agree over Neon's treatment. Ben Roberts, who is separated from his wife and lives in London, wanted his son to have chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Mr Justice Bodey was set to announce his decision on Saturday 8 December, but a scan on the previous day showed a 1 cm mass in Neon's brain, indicating that the cancer may have returned. The boy was undergoing further investigations on Monday 10 December.

Radiotherapy to the head and neck may cause intellectual impairment in young children, and Neon's mother claimed that she was told by a doctor that it would "fry his brain." She told

the court, "I want him to have the best quality of life, and I fear radiotherapy could damage and greatly affect his future."

In a newspaper interview on 8 December Neon's paternal grandfather said that his grandson's cancer had returned. But his mother told the *Times*, "We went for a scan and they did see something. They weren't too sure what it was.

"Doctors are checking and we are hoping it's scar tissue or something else. When I saw a headline today saying Neon's cancer is back, it shocked me. That's not true because we just don't know."

If the worst case scenario materialised, she told the newspaper, she would consent to radiotherapy and chemotherapy for her son. "I don't think I will have a choice," she said. "I was so hopeful that we could just get on with other, less harmful treatments. But I will be backed into a corner."

The case is due to come back to the High Court on 18 December if the parents fail to agree.

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