

Obese child may be removed from mother's care

By Sarah-Kate Templeton February 26, 2007 01:00am

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AN eight-year-old British boy who weighs 89kg, more than three times the average for his age, may be taken into care if his mother fails to improve his diet.

Connor McCreaddie, from Wallsend, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, has broken four beds and five bicycles. The family claims to have a history of dietary intolerance to fruit or vegetables.

His mother and grandmother will attend a child protection conference this week to decide his future, which could lead to proceedings to take him into care.

Connor could be placed on the child protection register, along with victims of physical and sexual abuse, or on the less serious children-in-need register.

The intervention of social services is a landmark in the fight against childhood obesity.

The boy's mother, Nicola McKeown, said: "If Connor gets taken into care, that is the worst scenario there could be.

"Hopefully, we will be able to work through it and come up with a good plan, and he will just be put on the at-risk register or some other register."

Two specialist obesity nurses, a consultant paediatrician, the deputy head of Connor's school, a police officer and at least two social workers are expected to be on the panel deciding what action should be taken.

A National Health Service source said: "We have attempted many times to arrange for Connor to have appointments with community and paediatric nutritionists, public health experts, school nurses and social workers to weigh and measure him and to address his diet, but the appointments have been missed.

"Taking the child into care or putting him on the child protection register is absolutely the last resort. We do not do these things lightly, but we've got to consider what effect this lifestyle is having on his health. Child abuse is not just about hitting your children or sexually abusing them – it's also about neglect."

The source added: "The long-term health effects of obesity, such as diabetes, are well-known, and it is concerning that Connor is more than twice the weight he should be. There has to be some parental responsibility."

The Sunday Times