



Lindsey and Paul Briggs with daughter Ella before his motorcycle accident last year. Lindsey says the injuries from the crash have left him worse off than if he had died

This is beyond torture — let my husband die

Sarah-Kate Templton
HEALTH EDITOR

THE wife of a Gulf War veteran will ask a High Court judge this week to rule that medical treatment keeping him alive should be withdrawn.

Paul Briggs, 43, a policeman, has been in a minimally conscious state in hospital for 17 months since being injured in a road accident.

Briggs, who has a young daughter, Ella, has shown no signs of recovery for well over a year.

Now his wife, Lindsey, has asked for his medical treatment to be withdrawn as she does not believe he would have wanted to be kept alive "purely by medical intervention" in an "unresponsive state". She described being forced to witness it as "beyond torture".

Briggs, from Merseyside, was riding his motorcycle to work for a night shift in July 2015 when he was struck by a novice motorist, driving on the wrong side of the road.

He was left with severe injuries, including a bleed on the brain, five fractures to his spine and bruising to internal organs. Briggs is unable to speak or make any informed decisions and has no independent control of his body.

One independent doctor, consulted by the family, has diagnosed Briggs as being in a "permanent vegetative state". It is believed that if he continued to receive treatment, he could live for another nine years in this state.

However, doctors treating Briggs at the Walton Centre, a neurosciences hospital in Liverpool, are understood to take a

different view from his wife and believe that he could, at some point, become more responsive.

The 26-year-old driver who struck Briggs was jailed for a year in July. During the sentencing hearing, Lindsey said the impact of her husband's injuries meant the situation was "much worse than if he had died at the scene".

She told the court: "While Paul remains in a horrific state, it is beyond devastating and affects every aspect of all our lives for the worse."

"We have had to endure seeing him like this every day,

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for many long, difficult months now."

Lindsey said it had shattered her life and that of other family members, adding: "I never knew that states worse than death existed until this happened to Paul."

Someone is classified as being in a minimally conscious state if they show clear but minimal or inconsistent awareness.

They may have periods where they can communicate or respond to commands, such

as moving a finger when asked. In some cases, a minimally conscious state is a stage on the route to recovery. It is not usually considered to be permanent until it has lasted several years.

A vegetative state means that a person is awake but is showing no signs of awareness. A person in such a state may open their eyes, wake up and fall asleep at regular intervals and have reflexes such as blinking when startled by a loud noise or withdrawing

their hand when it is squeezed hard. However, a person in a vegetative state shows no meaningful responses, such as following an object with their eyes or responding to voices.

Mathieu Culverhouse, of Irwin Mitchell, the law firm representing Lindsey Briggs, said: "The time since Paul's accident has been extremely difficult for Lindsey and Paul's family and Lindsey just wants what is best for him.

"She firmly believes that the withdrawal of treatment is in

Paul's best interests given his previously expressed wishes, his injuries and his current condition and prognosis.

"We will continue to support Lindsey through the legal process as she continues to fight for Paul's wishes and feelings to be respected and we will be asking the Court of Protection this week for treatment to be withdrawn based on all the available evidence Lindsey has received."

Briggs had not made any advance decision in writing

about what should happen in these circumstances.

Merseyside police said Briggs loved his job and was well respected by colleagues.

A spokesman for the Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust said: "This is an extremely complex case and the trust empathises with Mr Briggs's family.

"Mr Briggs's care has always been our top priority. It is now a matter for the Court of Protection and we await the outcome."