

Veteran left in coma after crash would have wanted right to die, judge rules

By Patrick Sawyer

A JUDGE has said that doctors should be able to withdraw treatment from a Gulf War veteran who was left in a coma after a head-on collision, ruling that is what he would have wanted.

Lindsey Briggs had asked judges to allow her policeman husband Paul to die, against the view of doctors at the Liverpool hospital where he is being treated who said it would be wrong to withdraw treatment as he is in a "minimally conscious state" but not a "permanent vegetative state".

Yesterday Mr Justice Charles, sitting in the Court of Protection, agreed that, despite his "natural instinct of survival", Pc Briggs would have wanted to die and that he should be moved to a hospice where he would stop receiving fluids and nutrition and would receive palliative care in his final few weeks.

Mr Justice Charles ruled that Pc Briggs's "best interests are best served by giving effect to what he would have been able to dictate by exercising his



Pc Paul Briggs with his wife Lindsey and daughter Ella. A crash left him in a coma

right to self determination rather than the very powerful counter arguments based on the preservation of his life".

However, the Official Solicitor, the official representing Pc Briggs' interests, said it would take the decision to the Court of Appeal.

Pc Briggs, 43, suffered a brain injury when Chelsea Rowe ploughed into his motorcycle in her Nissan Micra on July

3 2015 as he drove along the Birkenhead flyover on his way to work a night shift with Merseyside Police.

Rowe, 26, was given a 12-month suspended prison sentence in July this year, after admitting causing serious injury by dangerous driving.

Mrs Briggs welcomed Mr Justice Charles's ruling and said the decision to contest it would only prolong her family's agony. Speaking yesterday, she said: "Paul was such a selfless, kind and charitable person. He dedicated his career and his life to serving others. We know that he would have wanted us to pursue this case for him."

Doctors had told the court that Pc Briggs, who had previously served in the Gulf War with the Army, would benefit from being moved to a specialist rehabilitation centre and "a more socially stimulating environment".

However, the court ruled that, even in the best-case scenario, he would not regain the capacity to make complex decisions, would not improve physically and would need 24-hour care.