

Charlie Gard to be sent to hospice tomorrow

By **Robert Mendick** CHIEF REPORTER

CHARLIE GARD is expected to be removed from the care of Great Ormond Street Hospital and taken to a hospice to die, the High Court has been told.

Charlie's mother Connie Yates broke down in court after being told her final wish for her 11-month-old son to spend a week at home before his death had been turned down.

"What if that was your child?" she sobbed before saying: "I cannot be in the same room as him," – possibly in reference to the judge. She then stormed out.

Mr Justice Francis ruled last night that Charlie could be taken to a hospice where he would spend a few hours before his life support would be switched off, possibly tomorrow.

The judge extended a deadline until noon today for Charlie's parents – Miss Yates and Chris Gard – to find a paediatric intensive care team that could

look after the little boy around the clock. Last night, Miss Yates made a plea for a specialist doctor to come forward.

She wrote on Facebook: "URGENT we need a paediatric intensive care consultant to come forward to assist and facilitate with a hospice stay by 12pm tomorrow, we will pay privately. Please only email if you can help us! We need some peaceful time with our baby boy."

A family friend accused Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) of making it too difficult to put a specialist team in place.

The friend said: "The hospital have set the bar so high that in terms of the clinical team for Charlie's end of life nothing seemed good enough for GOSH.

"It is extraordinarily sad that there's been so much fuss about him dying at home. Connie and Chris have conceded a hospice but it was not their

first choice. They will be devastated they have not been granted their final wishes as parents."

The precise timing of Charlie's final hours was discussed at a hearing that was held behind closed doors because of the sensitivity.

The judge made an order – the de-

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tails of which were kept secret – that gives the precise deadline for Charlie's removal from GOSH and the length of time he can remain in a hospice before his ventilator tube is removed.

GOSH had pushed for Charlie's final days not to be dragged out.

Charlie's parents, who live in west London, withdrew an application on

Monday seeking to have the little boy, who is terminally ill and suffers from a rare genetic syndrome, transferred to a hospital in New York for experimental therapy. An American doctor who had previously said he would treat Charlie told the court it was too late to give him nucleoside therapy.

Fiona Paterson, GOSH's barrister, told the court yesterday: "It is the view of the clinical team we need to press ahead and transfer Charlie to a hospice by no later than Friday.

"It is simply unacceptable if this drags on another week. It is a strain on everyone involved to allow this to carry on. It is simply no gain."

She said the transfer to the hospice should take place by Friday morning.

At the start of another difficult court hearing, Grant Armstrong, the parents' barrister, offered a glimmer of hope saying that a "doctor who has previous experience as a surgeon in intensive care" had come forward to provide the

care for Charlie at home or at a hospice for a number of days. But the court discovered that the doctor, who cannot be named, turned out to be a GP with "no experience of intensive care medicine".

Nurses from GOSH had also volunteered their services but without specialist consultants in place, the judge ruled that Charlie could not be kept on a ventilator for days outside the hospital.

Mr Justice Francis also took a swipe at the American Right which has been using the case to claim universal healthcare had failed Charlie.

"I do want to deal with the notion this issue is being dealt with by a judge because we have socialised medicine in this country," he said, explaining his role was to decide what was best for Charlie because the hospital and his parents were in dispute.

"The notion the state is involved because we have a national health service is pure nonsense," he added.