

We tried our best, says hospital in baby Charlie row

Frances Gibb Legal Editor

The hospital caring for Charlie Gard said the battle over his care had been a "uniquely painful and distressing process for all concerned" as a High Court judge confirmed that the baby would be moved to a hospice where he will "inevitably" die soon afterwards.

Shortly after the order was released, Great Ormond Street Hospital expressed deep regret at the "profound and heartfelt" differences between the views of its doctors and his parents.

It insisted that the 11-month old boy would go to a children's hospice that is a "very special place" where they will make his last moments as comfortable and peaceful as possible.

It paid tribute to his parents, Connie Yates, 31, and Chris Gard, 32, saying they had "tirelessly advocated for what they sincerely believed was right for their son and nobody could fault them for doing so".

However, Ms Yates criticised the hospital authorities because they had "denied us our final wish".

She said: "We just want some peace with our son, no hospital, no lawyers, no courts, no media, just quality time with Charlie away from everything to say goodbye to him in the most loving way. Most people won't ever have to go through what we have been through. We've had no control over our son's life and no control over our son's death."

Mr Justice Francis confirmed his order for Charlie's transfer to a hospice after a noon deadline passed for the parents to come up with an acceptable care package that could cater for Charlie's complex needs in a hospice setting.

Doctors at the hospital and Charlie's parents disagreed over arrangements for how long the baby should receive life-support treatment and where this should take place.

The hospital medical team said he should move to a hospice soon and life-

support treatment should end shortly after his arrival, while his parents wanted to keep him on life support for several days so that they could spend more time with him.

The deadline passed with no such expert team found and the judge's order allowed for Charlie's transfer to an agreed hospice at an agreed time and day and for his artificial ventilation to be withdrawn after a stated period.

Charlie's parents had wanted to take their baby home to die but the judge ruled that was not practical.

Following the ruling, the hospital said: "All of us at Great Ormond Street Hospital get up every morning to care for sick children, not to cause further anguish to devoted parents like Chris and Connie.

"We have tried absolutely everything to accommodate their final wishes and engaged not only with those who volunteered to treat Charlie but experts from across the health service in close consultation with the NHS to make this happen. Every single one of us wishes there could have been a less tragic outcome."

On Wednesday at the final hearing of the case after five months of litigation, the judge said that the time had come for a decision to be made.

Charlie's parents became embroiled in a new fight with doctors earlier this week, a day after abandoning attempts to persuade the judge to let their son travel to America for experimental treatment.

Mr Gard and Ms Yates, who are from Bedfont, west London, had asked Mr Justice Francis to rule that Charlie should be allowed to undergo a therapy trial in New York. Doctors at Great Ormond Street said the therapy would not help and argued that life-support treatment should stop.

The case has attracted international attention with President Trump and the Pope both entering the fray.