

# Doctors can let sick child die, judge rules

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The parents of a baby boy suffering from a mystery illness have lost a battle to keep him on life support.

Specialists at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool had asked a High Court judge to allow them to stop providing life support to Alfie Evans, 21 months. His parents, Kate James, 20, and Tom Evans, 21, wanted treatment to continue.

Yesterday in London Mr Justice Hayden ruled in favour of the hospital after a hearing in the Family Division of the High Court in Liverpool earlier this month. He said he accepted medical evidence that showed further treatment was futile, adding that he had reached his conclusion with great sadness.

The judge said that while doctors agreed that Alfie had a degenerative neurological disorder, there was no specific diagnosis, and "in fact there may never be". "Alfie's need now is for good quality palliative care," he said. "He requires peace, quiet and privacy in order that he may conclude his life as he has lived it, with dignity."

He paid tribute to Alfie's parents and to doctors and nurses at Alder Hey. Alfie's mother left the hearing before Mr Justice Hayden reached his conclusion and his father broke down as the decision was announced. The family is



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believed to be considering whether to appeal.

The judge had previously heard that Alfie, who was born in May 2016, was in a "semi-vegetative state" and had a degenerative condition of the nervous system that doctors had not definitively diagnosed. Continuing to provide

life support was "unkind, unfair and inhumane", doctors had said. Alfie's parents believe that he responds to them, however.

The judge had visited Alfie in hospital and praised his parents, saying that they had tried to explore every possible avenue.

Outside Alder Hey about 30 members of "Alfie's Army" were supporting the family's campaign as they awaited the decision. As the news filtered through, supporters stood in silence, wiping away tears and exchanging hugs.

Danielle Page, 32, from St Helens, said: "It is devastating. He's not lying there like a vegetable, he's a little boy, he's a miracle. He needs a chance. Everything that has been thrown at him, he's battled through. We are not going to give up."

Alfie's father said after the ruling: "I need time to reflect on the judgment."



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