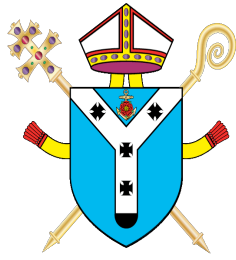


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Alfie Evans

Alfie Evans is the son of Tom Evans and Kate James. He is now 23 months old and has been at Alder Childrens Hospital in Liverpool since December 2016 suffering from an undiagnosed degenerative neurological condition, most of that time he has spent on a ventilator.

The medical staff acting 'in the best interests of Alfie' wished to withdraw medical treatment and replace it with palliative care. Alfie's parents challenged this decision and in February after a hearing in the Family Division of the High Court in London and Liverpool, Mr Justice Hayden ruled that doctors at Alder Hey could stop treating Alfie. This was against the wishes of his parents.

The parents unsuccessfully challenged this ruling in the High Court, and Court of Appeal, and later their case was rejected by the United Kingdom Supreme Court and European Court of Human Rights.

The Hospital authorities and the parents were unable to agree a programme of palliative care. On Wednesday 11 April the Hospital, as they were legally required to do in such a situation, returned to the High Court and to obtain permission to remove Alfie from the ventilator and implement a programme of palliative care. Judge Hayden said Alfie's undiagnosed degenerative brain disease was 'profoundly unfair', as the court endorsed an end-of-life care plan drawn up by specialists. He went on to say that details of the plan could not be revealed because Alfie was entitled to privacy.

The Roman Catholic community of the Archdiocese of Liverpool together with those of other denominations and faiths continue to pray for Alfie, his family and those who accompany him on this journey. Bishop Tom Williams, Auxiliary Bishop of Liverpool, who has worked in healthcare chaplaincy for many years, has been involved with the chaplaincy team at Alder Hey offering support to doctors and staff. He has not met with the parents who, it is understood, are not Roman Catholic.

In these last weeks there have been a number of gatherings variously described as 'demonstrations', 'protests' and 'rallies' to offer 'support for Alfie and his family'. These have taken place in and around Liverpool City Centre with up to several hundred people taking part.

Yesterday evening (Thursday 12 April 2018) a large demonstration of 1,000 people took place outside Alder Hey Hospital. The parents had transportation available to remove Alfie from the hospital, but this was not used. There is also speculation that the demonstration took place as the time for withdrawal of treatment may have been imminent.

The following statement was issued by Merseyside Police following the demonstration:

Statement from Assistant Chief Constable Serena Kennedy:

'We were present at Alder Hey Hospital tonight (Thursday 12 April) while the hospital and family of Alfie Evans sought clarity from Mr Justice Hayden in relation to the treatment of Alfie.

'Although peaceful, the large protest that took place tonight did cause significant traffic disruption and inconvenience for other people trying to access the hospital. I want to remind people to please consider other hospital users, as these delays could have caused serious problems for staff and patients alike.

'We fully understand what a sensitive and emotional time this is for everyone involved and I would also therefore like to pass on our appreciation for the way in which Alfie's family were later able to speak to the crowd and offer assurance and calm.'

Alder Hey Hospital issued the following statement:

Statement issued by Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust
(13 April 2018)

'Last night the hospital experienced significant disruption, due to a large protest concerning one of our patients. We wish to pay tribute to our amazing staff, who worked tirelessly under extremely difficult conditions to manage the implications of this disruption.

'Alder Hey is a special place with highly skilled staff who dedicate their lives to caring for and looking after thousands of sick and ill children every year.

'Our priority will always be to protect and look after the welfare of all patients and staff and to continue to provide outstanding care to our patients and families, which we know is recognised by colleagues across the NHS and in the wider public beyond.'

Alder Hey Hospital has been a centre of excellence in the care of children for over 100 years and cares for over 270,000 children, young people and their families each year. It does not work in isolation and clinical evidence is gathered from centres throughout the world.

It is being reported this afternoon, Friday 13 April, that the parents and their legal advisers are to mount another legal challenge which is to be heard in the Court of Appeal on Monday next, 16 April: pending that judgement Alfie will continue to receive treatment. There is speculation that the challenge may concern the rights of the parents to remove Alfie from the hospital. It is also reported that some 'demonstrators' are gathering at the Hospital this afternoon.

Peter Heneghan
13 April 2018