

Summary: Prompt list for phone and in person urgent conversations about withdrawing or withholding life-sustaining treatments in UK critical care

PREPARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check LPA / ADRT status • Clarify what you are going to say, including arrangements and information you will provide at the end • If possible, find a comfortable, private place
START AND SIGNPOST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourself, your role, name the patient, check who you are speaking to • Are you able to talk? Are you safe to talk at the moment (e.g. not driving)? • If possible, signpost by explaining reason for call, for instance 'I'm going to give you an update on
EXPRESS EMPATHY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone of voice, sorry statements, show understanding about emotion but don't overclaim you understand: • Something like: 'We know this is really tough, I can't imagine how hard it is for you right now'
FORECAST, CHECK UNDERSTANDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain, in a way that forecasts what is to come, that you need to talk about the patient's condition • Find out what they know, understand already
CLINICAL COMMENTARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear and honest about condition • If the patient is dying, use that word or a non-ambiguous alternative (e.g. will not survive) • Convey uncertainty if appropriate, avoid raising hopes unnecessarily
ELICIT PATIENT'S WISHES & CLARIFY WHO WILL ACTUALLY MAKE THE DECISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check who is with them now, who they can talk to after • Ask about the patient's values, goals, and wishes, allowing time • Explain it's a medical decision, but that their views and their knowledge of the patient's views are important [unless LPA Health and Welfare in place – see full guidance]
VOICE THE DECISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly summarise what they have said • Give the team's clinical opinion • Reiterate this is a collective clinical decision, in which the patient's views are taken into account • With empathic statements, check the need for further explanation, articulate the decision
SUMMARISE AND SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check need for further explanation. Sensitively restate the decision, explain what will happen next • Emphasise care will continue, that the team is not abandoning the patient • Allow time for emotions to be expressed • Signpost to support and who will next contact them and when

V = Value comments made by the family A = Acknowledge family emotions L = Listen U = Understand the patient as a person E = Elicit family questions