Table 3

Key components of a best interests meeting for people in a prolonged state of unconsciousness

Patient	Give full name, address, and NHS no.
Question(s) or situation(s) being considered	In reality it is best to consider a range of issues: ● Any immediate options/decisions ● Policy for likely or potential situations needing – Immediate decision - e.g. cardiac arrest – Urgent decision – e.g. transfer to ITU, further operation – Less urgent decision – e.g. insertion of feeding tube ● Life-prolonging treatment (once the state is permanent)
Mental capacity	Confirm that (a) the person does not have the capacity to make the decision and (b) it is not possible to delay action until capacity is regained. State where the assessment is documented
Advance decision to refuse treatment (ADRT)	Is there a valid ADRT for any question? If so, why is it not being followed?
Can someone else decide?	Is there an attorney or court-appointed deputy with powers over welfare decisions able to make the decision? If so, they become the decision maker
Process details	Place meeting held, date, chairperson (and decision maker if different)
People present	Name, role/relationship of each person
People also consulted	Name, role/relationship of each other person contributing
Should an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) be present?	If a person does not have any friend or relative to advocate for them (or there are doubts about their ability to advocate appropriately) and if the decision concerns a: ● Major medical intervention or ● Transfer to a nursing home for longer than eight weeks or a hospital for more than four weeks or ● Safeguarding concern then an IMCA must be appointed and involved
Person's views	What are, or might be, the views of the person? Consider (a) existing stated or implied views (b) previously stated or implied views. Facilitate their participation as far as possible
Person's values and beliefs	What was the person's overall set of values and beliefs? What other factors might they have considered in relation to this decision?
Options considered	Give a brief summary of options considered for each situation
Decision made, and why	Specify the choice(s) made and confirm that this decision: ● Is concordant with known or suggested views and values of the patient ● Is the least restrictive option available ● Maximises the risk/benefit ratio
Decision maker	Give name, role/relationship, contact details