



HILLINGDON

LONDON

Email address for response: safeandsustainable@ipsos-mori.com
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RSLT-SRLZ-JYYY
Safe and Sustainable
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Research Services House
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9 September 2011

Dear Sirs

Safe and Sustainable - A New Vision for Children's Congenital Heart Services in England: Consultation Document

Hillingdon Council's External Services Scrutiny Committee welcomes the opportunity to respond to Safe and Sustainable, a new vision for children's congenital heart services in England.

A number of our concerns have already been expressed in the response submitted on 30 June 2011 by the London Borough of Hillingdon's Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing, Councillor Philip Corthorne.

In July 2011, the Committee held a meeting with representatives from both NHS Specialised Services and the Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust (RB&H) to consider the proposals in some detail.

We note that the review undertaken by the independent panel of experts and chaired by Professor Ian Kennedy rated all 11 centres in England against:

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- How well they were currently meeting core standards based on the self-assessment and the visits.
- Robustness and deliverability of each centre's development plans to meet all of the standards' core requirements.
- Impact of increased activity: the panel assessed how centres could expand facilities and workforce.

This process resulted in the RB&H being awarded a score of 464 out of a maximum possible score of 610. This score saw RB&H rated joint fourth, alongside Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust (GOSH).

By bringing rare and complex cases together, RB&H has developed clinical and research expertise that is unmatched. RB&Hs paediatric respiratory services have been built up over nearly 50 years, yet it appears that no consideration has been given to the ability of other hospitals to deliver these services if they were to be relocated.

We understand that there is a risk that the removal of children's cardiac surgery from RB&H would render the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit potentially unviable. Concerns have been expressed that the potential impact on services provided by the RB&H anaesthetic department would be significant if children's cardiac surgery was no longer provided; complex bronchoscopies needing intensive treatment would have to be referred elsewhere; and complex cystic fibrosis cases might have to go elsewhere for specific aspects of their management.

The External Services Scrutiny Committee wholeheartedly agrees that there is a need to ensure consistent quality regardless of where children live and that improvements need to be made to the way quality is measured. At our last Committee meeting, it was widely agreed that parents were prepared to travel significant distances to get the best treatment for their children. We noted that travel distance is unlikely to deter most patients and their families from seeking the best available treatment, and 88.4% of children will only have one surgical intervention.

To achieve the NHS' aspirations for "safety, sustainability, better outcomes and excellent care for children", we believe that further consideration should be given to retaining the 6/7 centres that scored highest in the review, irrespective of where they are situated.

We recognise that there is a need to focus the provision of children's heart surgery in fewer teams, with those teams undertaking a greater volume of work. We also welcome the concept of developing congenital heart networks which would improve sharing of expertise and pooling of resources, in order to achieve the best possible care and outcomes for children.

The independent review, along with the Safe and Sustainable proposals, has not fully explored the option of two federated teams working from three London sites. This option would ensure the accessibility of the service, reduce the number of teams from three to two, increase team quality and maintain relationships with other services at the three centres.

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We therefore cannot support the proposal to move to a system with two specialist surgical centres in London. One consequence of the preferred options contained within the review proposals is that children's heart surgery would be removed from RBH. We believe that a strong case for this proposal has not been made by the NHS and that alternative ideas should be pursued to increase the overall benefits of the service without losing all of the expertise and the accessibility of the RBH clinical teams. In particular, the idea of using fewer teams working across the same number of centres should be explored.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Michael White

Cavendish Ward and

Chairman of External Services Scrutiny Committee

cc: Cllr Philip Corthorne, Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing.
Mayor of Hillingdon, Cllr Mary O'Connor MBE
Cllr Ray Puddifoot, Leader of the Council
Hugh Dunnachie, Chief Executive
Dr Ellis Friedman, Joint Director of Public Health
Kevin Byrne, Head of Policy & Performance
John Wheatley, Senior Policy Officer

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