

Holding Statement from the Trust Board to JHOSC regarding the Safe and Sustainable review of Children's Heart Surgery Services, Tuesday 17th July 2012

The decision made by the Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts (JCPCT) on Wednesday 4th July, to commission children's heart surgery from Newcastle rather than Leeds was deeply disappointing. This decision will affect our patients, now and in the future, their parents and our staff more than anyone else and they have already displayed their dismay at the process and the perplexing decision the Committee reached far more eloquently than we would be able to.

Like them, the Chairman of the Board of Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust has expressed our unease with this decision and the illogical nature of the outcome of the meeting 4th July. It also seems to fly in the face of patient choice and the very clear views of over 600,000 people in this region.

We are grateful that the whole community has come together to support our unit in such overwhelming numbers. It is clearly a very much loved service which we are proud to provide. We are following with interest the work of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Yorkshire and the Humber (JOSC), the deliberations of the Children's Heart Surgery Fund and the region's Members of Parliament as they explore what they can do to challenge the outcome of the review, taking account of the expressed wishes of the patients.

In addition to the work described above the Board of Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust is now considering its options. We meet again at a Board meeting on 26th July 2012. We will advise the JHOSC immediately of any further action we propose to take. We will support others in following due process. In the meantime we will continue to provide safe and effective care for those patients referred to us. Unless or until we advise you otherwise our approach is to continue to provide high quality services as usual at this very popular and much loved unit.

Ref: SH/SB
Date: 2012

From: Stacey Hunter
Divisional General Manager
Divisional Headquarters
1st Floor Old Nurses Home
Leeds General Infirmary
LEEDS LS1 3EX

Tel: 0113 39 22874

Dear

I am writing to update you on where things stand after the deeply disappointing decision on the outcome of the Safe and Sustainable review of children's heart surgery taken by the Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts at their meeting in London on Wednesday 4 July.

The decision the Committee reached that day has already received widespread condemnation in this region, and I know that many families have been contacting staff at Leeds General Infirmary to express their shock and disbelief and to ask what happens next.

The most important thing to say, in terms of the care and support needed by your child, is that it remains "business as usual" for the team here in Leeds, including our children's cardiac surgeons. Any changes required as a consequence of this decision will need careful planning. The stated intention is for those changes to be in place by 2014 - so you will see that in the meantime we need to continue to do what we have always done to provide safe and effective care for our patients. We will be continuing to provide exactly the same levels of care as normal, so please attend appointments as usual and contact us through the network we have in place.

Clearly this decision has been a huge blow to staff on the unit and to our hospital as a whole, and it is not one we believe should go unchallenged. We are actively considering if there is a legitimate basis on which to challenge this decision. The Trust Chairman, Mike Collier, has already said publicly that the decision flies in the face of logic and needs looking at again.

Separately a huge amount of work is going on involving our partners and supporters right across Yorkshire, Northern Lincolnshire and North Derbyshire, all of whom are telling us they are determined to speak out against this decision.

MPs and Peers from all political parties have already started asking questions in Parliament and will be concentrating on persuading the Secretary of State for Health to review the conclusion reached by the Safe & Sustainable Team.

Councillors across the region have also been extremely interested in this outcome and are particularly concerned about how little weight has been given to issues such as population density and geography in this region. They have also said the decision goes against the clearly stated wishes of parents in Yorkshire and the surrounding area plus the 600,000 people who signed a petition in support of keeping our service in Leeds.

Councils have a statutory duty to scrutinise the National Health Service and can refer any decisions they disagree with back to the Secretary of State, particularly if they feel proper process has not been followed. There are strong indications this will happen in this case.

In addition, our dedicated charity, the Children's Heart Surgery Fund, which has done so much to raise the profile of the threat to Leeds during this national consultation, are taking legal advice about the possibility of a Judicial Review challenging the lawfulness of the process.

I know that many of you are already extremely involved in the campaign and have spoken to your MPs, councillors and the media to voice your concerns. We are incredibly grateful for your support which is especially powerful when you have real experience of the realities of coping with a child with a heart condition and all the worry that entails.

I hope this letter gives you some reassurance both about continuity of service and the potential options available to challenge this decision. We will continue to keep you informed as the situation develops.

In the meantime, if you have any specific concerns or questions about the impact on your child's condition, please contact the clinical nurse specialist you normally deal with, who will be happy to help.

Yours

Stacey Hunter

Stacey Hunter
Divisional General Manager
Women's, Children's, Head, Neck and Dental Division