

SAFE & SUSTAINABLE: REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S HEART SURGERY - IMPACT ON PATIENTS AND SERVICES YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

The recent launch of a four-month public consultation on the Safe and Sustainable review of children's heart surgery units across England has a potentially very significant impact on patients across the Yorkshire and the Humber region.

Retaining the Leeds service is in only one of the four options being put forward for consultation, and is the least favoured option based on the complex scoring methodology adopted by the review team. There is therefore a very real prospect that the unit could be closed, with children having to travel outside this region for their surgery.

We believe there is a very strong case that Leeds should remain open and expand, and we are determined to take every opportunity of making that case throughout the consultation to as many different groups as possible. We are writing to seek your support in helping us argue that case, based on the serious implications this has for children from your district who need cardiac surgery.

Our view is that the scoring used to determine the options does not sufficiently reflect the important advantages Leeds has in terms of access, the size of the regional population, the services we provide on a single children's hospital site (alongside adult cardiac services) and the strength of the clinical network that has been established for paediatric congenital heart disease.

Sir Ian Kennedy's review team has already confirmed that there are no concerns about patient safety at any of the centres that remain within the scope of the review, so the decision ought to be made on the basis of sustainability of services. You will be aware of the strength of the geographical case for Leeds based on the large regional population we serve, so we believe there is a convincing argument to be made for retaining and expanding the Leeds service.

Already a strong public campaign has started, led by one of our charities, the Children's Heart Surgery Fund, who have members and families they support from all the district hospitals in our region, and many of them are already speaking to their local media calling for the Leeds service to be retained. The charity has also been busy lobbying regional MPs, a number of whom have already been extremely supportive of keeping this service in Yorkshire.

Given that the outcome of this review is a significant issue for the entire Yorkshire and Humber region, we are keen to raise awareness that this is a regional issue and not one which only affects Leeds.

Whilst the review was primarily relating to safe and sustainable paediatric cardiac surgery, we are concerned that the impact on other services which are included in the scope of the review may have been missed, or not fully understood. This relates primarily to paediatric cardiology intervention and, as a consequence, the effective diagnosis of "blue babies".