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PRESS RELEASE

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20 MPs call for Royal Brompton's heart surgery to be saved

Twenty MPs from across London and the south today (14 March) called on Jeremy Hunt to halt plans to end congenital heart services (CHD) at Royal Brompton Hospital.

The MPs, from all political parties, signed a letter to the Health Secretary opposing the proposed closure of the largest congenital heart disease service in the country with over 12,500 patients and among the best patient outcomes in the country.

The planned closure is the result of NHS England stating that hospitals providing CHD services must have certain other children's services on the same site. Royal Brompton meets this standard by working in partnership with neighbouring Chelsea and Westminster Hospital to provide these services.

At a public consultation event on 7 March, NHS England admitted that it has no scientific evidence to support the ending of services, and has also been unable to explain how removing services at Royal Brompton Hospital would make things better for patients.

If the plans went ahead, Royal Brompton would be forced to withdraw all CHD services, requiring both child and adult patients to find another hospital to provide their care. The plans would also dismantle Royal Brompton's world-leading adult CHD research team – responsible for publishing more papers than any other centre in the world – and would force the closure of its children's intensive care unit.

Without intensive care the Trust's paediatric cystic fibrosis and difficult asthma services, both of which are the largest service of their kind in the UK, would also have to close. NHS England do not currently have any plan for dealing with these, and other, wider consequences.

The MPs' letter points out that three years ago Jeremy Hunt intervened to halt a similar proposal following a scathing report by an independent panel of experts¹. The MPs are

¹ <http://www.rbht.nhs.uk/media/press-releases/archive/statement-regarding-the-independent-reconfiguration-panels-review-of-safe-sustainable/>

asking him to do the same again to end uncertainty for patients and staff and prevent NHS England from wasting much needed resources on a completely unnecessary service reconfiguration.

The MPs conclude their letter by asking the Health Secretary: “Given that commissioners and regulators acknowledge that there are no concerns about the quality of the Royal Brompton’s congenital heart disease services, what problem is the proposal aiming to solve?

“Would you not agree that the closure could only be justified if it is clearly set out how this would lead to a better service for patients? To date NHS England has completely failed to demonstrate this.”

Ends

For further information contact:

Oliver Wilkinson

Deputy Head of Communications

Tel: 020 7351 8672

Email: o.wilkinson@rbht.nhs.uk

Visit: www.rbht.nhs.uk/about/our-work/congenital-heart-disease-nhs-england-review/

Notes to editors:

Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust is the UK’s largest specialist centre for the treatment of heart and lung disease. Working from two sites, Royal Brompton Hospital in Chelsea, West London, and Harefield Hospital, near Uxbridge, the Trust has an international reputation for the expertise of its staff, high standard of care and research success. Experts at the Trust help patients from all age groups who have heart and lung problems and provide some of the most complex surgery and sophisticated treatments available anywhere in the world.

The Trust is the UK’s largest centre for the treatment of adult congenital heart disease and is the country’s leading provider of specialist respiratory care. Over the years the Trust has been responsible for major medical breakthroughs, such as the UK’s first combined heart and lung transplant. It established the UK’s first adult service for cystic fibrosis, which is now one of Europe’s biggest treatment centres for the condition, and has pioneered the use of primary angioplasty for the treatment of heart attacks. Today the Heart Attack Centre at Harefield has one of the fastest arrival-to-treatment times in the UK, a crucial factor in patients’ survival.

As a member of the Academic Health Science Centre (AHSC), in collaboration with Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare Trust and The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, the Trust helps to drive innovation and improved care for over 1.1 million patients each year in North West London, by aligning the research, education and clinical services of the partner organisations. For more information, visit: www.rbht.nhs.uk