

Patient focus...

The newsletter for patients and our foundation trust members. *Special issue: September 2011*

Children's services review update

The last issue of *Patient Focus* provided details about the Trust's legal challenge of the consultation on the future of children's heart surgery in England. We are pleased to say that on 15 July, Mr Justice Burnett granted permission for a judicial review on all grounds covered in the application.

As you will remember, the 'Safe and Sustainable' review, managed by NHS Specialised Services, presented four options for reducing the number of hospitals undertaking children's heart surgery; each included closing one of three centres in London.

We believe the options recommended by Safe and Sustainable are fundamentally flawed and that a consultation based on them is unlawful. Despite being a very successful centre, one of the largest and safest in the country, and meeting all the requirements set out by the review panel, Royal Brompton is not included in any of the recommended options.

Although we are in complete agreement that all babies and children who have heart surgery deserve the best possible treatment and care, we also believe that any decision about the future of these vital services must be based on sound clinical evidence using an open and transparent decision-making process. Unfortunately, this is not the case – the review panel's reasons for excluding Royal Brompton appear to be subjective and they do not take into account the damaging knock-on effects to our other services.

It was with great regret that legal action was taken. The Trust approached those responsible for the consultation twice, when significant flaws were identified, with a view to preventing a court case. Both our approaches were rejected. Our arguments will now be heard in the Royal Courts of Justice at the end of September.

As part of the public consultation, the Trust submitted a formal response. Please take the time to read it on our website, along with the 'skeleton argument' that was presented in court on 14 and 15 July: www.rbht.nhs.uk/response

No change to your care

We understand that you may be concerned about the future following the Safe and Sustainable consultation. Please rest assured that no final decisions have been made and that we are doing everything in our power to prevent changes to the way you receive care.

It is very much business as usual at the Trust. We are continuing to invest in our paediatric and other facilities at both hospitals to ensure that you continue to receive the world-class care you have come to expect from us.

Independent panel to visit

After finally acknowledging that the knock-on effects of proposals to remove children's heart surgery from Royal Brompton needed further consideration, Safe and Sustainable has convened an independent, international panel to investigate. The panel will visit the Trust on 6 September and its recommendations will be

published later in the year. Unfortunately, the scope for this review is limited, and does not take into account the impact on paediatric interventional cardiology, adult congenital heart disease and pulmonary hypertension. However, we very much look forward to meeting the panel and providing detailed information to support our views.

“ I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all sincerely for your strong support on this issue. The real winners in this process will be you, our patients, and we will continue to fight for you for as long as it takes. ”

Mr Bob Bell, chief executive of Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust



Children's services review update (continued)

Help us – please write to your MP

Writing to your local MP is the most powerful thing you can do to help us at the moment. But there is only a small window of opportunity, so please act fast!

MPs will be sitting for just 10 days, 6-15 September, between their summer break and the conference recess. Send a letter now telling your MP why you believe it is vital for Royal Brompton's children's heart surgery services to continue.

Responses from MPs to your letters so far have been extremely encouraging, but it is vital that we maintain the momentum.

Emily Thornberry, MP for Islington South and Finsbury:

"I was pleased to see that the Trust is taking action in the courts, and I have asked the Secretary of State to review the decision."

Angie Bray, MP for Ealing Central and Acton: "Thank you for taking the time to contact me about paediatric services at Royal Brompton. I agree that it is of

considerable concern ... so I am happy to see what I can do to help. I have been in discussions with Greg Hands ... we will both attempt to raise the issue on the floor of the House of Commons."

Our website has two example letters – one for people who are writing for the first time and one for people who have previously written to their MP:

www.rbht.nhs.uk/mpletter.

If you don't know who your MP is, you can find names and addresses at www.theyworkforyou.com/mps

From the frontline

We asked our consultants to tell us how the proposed closure will affect their patients. Here are some of their comments:

"The idea of removing children's heart surgery from Royal Brompton concerns me a great deal. If surgery goes, then anaesthesia and intensive care for children will also go. We will be completely unable to investigate children properly. For example, we won't be able to carry out a bronchoscopy and, in effect, we will be unable to look after any sick child."

Professor Andrew Bush, professor of respiratory medicine

"Cardiovascular disease is not defined solely by age – more the prevailing anatomy and physiology. Comprehensive care of any patient, child or adult, may need skills found outside traditional groupings of doctors. For example, closure of an ischaemic ventricular septal defect in an adult may be best undertaken by a paediatric cardiologist for

whom similar procedures are routine. Alternatively, a child with a coronary artery anomaly may be best assisted by a surgeon with a primarily adult practice that focuses on coronary artery disease."

Dr Simon Finney – consultant in adult intensive care and anaesthesia

"There is no evidence to say that dismantling a very large and successful service can be done while retaining the skills of the teams within the institution, and there is certainly no reassurance that this can be done without causing harm to our patients... if I believed this process had been driven by a desire to improve healthcare for all patients I would fully support it."

Dr Gillian Halley, paediatric intensivist

"Children will certainly suffer as a result of the proposed changes and, on behalf of these patients, I feel strongly that the changes should be reconsidered."

Dr Jan Till, paediatric cardiologist

"When deciding whether or not to move with my family from Germany

to the UK, the prospect of working with the 'Brompton model' of care for patients with congenital heart disease was the strongest argument. In Germany, and internationally, the "Brompton model" is regarded as the role model for care of patients with congenital heart disease of all age groups."

Dr Anselm Uebing – consultant cardiologist

You can read further comments at: www.rbht.nhs.uk/frontline



Prof Andrew Bush with patient Georgie Wren

Support in Parliament

MP for Chelsea and Fulham, Mr Greg Hands, made a strong speech in our favour during a House of Commons debate on 23 June. This was a major boost towards saving our children's

heart services and he was supported in his statements by a number of other MPs.

Mr Hands questioned the process extensively and concluded his argument by asking that the case be reviewed because "Royal Brompton is good enough, large

enough and loved enough to survive."

He also showed his full support and commitment when he joined our patients, parents and supporters in presenting a petition, signed by 45,000 people, at 10 Downing Street.