

Report to: **East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**

Date: **10th March 2011**

By: **Director of Governance and Community Services**

Title of report: **Safe and Sustainable Children's Heart Surgery in England**

Purpose of report: **To brief the Committee about a national consultation on the provision of heart surgery for children in England and to agree how HOSC should respond.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOSC is recommended to:

- 1. agree that the proposals do not represent a 'substantial development or variation' to health services for East Sussex residents as set out in health scrutiny legislation.**
 - 2. agree that a regional response to the consultation should be prepared by the South East Coast HOSC Chairmen network as described in paragraph 4.4.**
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1. Background

1.1 Over the past two years or so, NHS Specialised Services, an NHS organisation which commissions highly specialist services for rare conditions on a national basis, has been undertaking a review of children's heart surgery in England. The full title of the review is 'The Safe and Sustainable Review of Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services in England'. The review has been undertaken on behalf of all Primary Care Trusts in the country.

1.2 Congenital heart disease refers to defects in a child's heart which are present from birth. It is a relatively rare, lifelong condition often requiring very complex treatment from a team of heart specialists. 85% of children with the condition survive into adulthood.

1.3 There are currently 11 hospital trusts in England which provide children's heart surgery, including three in London. A number of other hospitals provide related services for children with heart conditions but do not provide surgery.

2. The review

2.1 The review, which is supported by a range of professional bodies, has been undertaken in response to variation in the standard of care across the country and concern that smaller centres are not sustainable for the future.

2.2 The review has been through a number of stages, including:

- The development of a set of service standards for the provision of children's heart surgery.
- Review of the current hospitals providing surgery against the new standards.
- Development of options for how surgery should be provided in the future.

2.3 The review has now reached the stage where a set of options has been agreed for public consultation between 28th February and 1st July 2011. The consultation covers three areas:

- The proposed national standards.
- The suggested new approach to providing children's congenital heart services.
- The proposed options for reconfiguring the service.

2.4 The proposals are based around the concept of congenital heart networks – linked hospitals pooling expertise to deliver the range of services for children and young people. Each

network would include specialist surgical centre(s) as well as other centres providing ongoing, non-surgical care. The aim is to achieve improved standards of care, reduced variation and more joined-up services, providing assessment and ongoing care as locally as possible.

2.5 It is proposed that the number of surgical centres is reduced from 11 to six or seven. The review cites evidence of a link between larger centres and better clinical outcomes. The new standards require a minimum of four surgeons in each centre, each performing 100-125 procedures per year, suggesting that a surgical centre should undertake a minimum of 400-500 procedures annually. Currently only three of the 11 centres have four surgeons and there is considerable variation in the number of operations carried out at each centre annually (from 130 to over 500).

2.6 It is argued that smaller centres may not see the same volume and variety of caseload that colleagues in a larger centre may see and there is a risk in smaller centres that there may be times when cardiac surgery teams are not available, leading to a lack of 24/7 care, cancelled operations and infrequent practice amongst surgeons who have relatively small caseloads.

3. Local implications

3.1 Appendix 1 lists the current surgical centres and summarises the options for the future. It can be seen that there are no surgical centres within the South East Coast region, the nearest being three in London and one in Southampton which serve the region. These specialist providers have a history of linking to local hospitals within the region to provide local clinics but all surgery is provided at the specialist centres.

3.2 It can also be seen that all the proposed options for future configuration involve two surgical centres continuing to be available in London.

3.3 Data supplied by the South East Coast Specialised Commissioning Group shows that in 2009/10 in East Sussex Downs and Weald there were two inpatient stays at surgical centres, and one inpatient stay from the Hastings and Rother area.

4. HOSC response

4.1 All HOSCs in England are being asked to consider whether the proposals represent a 'substantial development or variation' to health services for their residents, requiring formal consultation with the committee as set out in health scrutiny legislation. If a number of HOSCs consider this to be the case, one or more large joint HOSCs will need to be established to respond to the consultation.

4.2 If a HOSC does not consider the proposals to be substantial there is still the option for the committee to respond informally to the consultation process with any comments it wishes to be taken into consideration.

4.3 For children's heart surgery East Sussex residents are primarily served by London hospitals, and will continue to be under the proposals. The number of residents affected by the proposals for a reduced number of surgical centres is very small. It is therefore recommended that HOSC agrees the proposals do not constitute a substantial change for East Sussex residents.

4.4 However, the Committee may have views on the wider aspects of the proposals such as the standards of care and the proposed role of local non-surgical centres within the networks. These issues are common across the South East Coast region and it may be appropriate, and more powerful to develop an informal response to the consultation in conjunction with other HOSCs in the region through the network of South East Coast HOSC Chairmen which meets on a regular basis. Members of individual HOSCs would be invited to contribute views to this process, with the Chairmen agreeing a combined response on behalf of the region.

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Current surgical centres

1. Newcastle-upon-Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
2. Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
3. Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust (Liverpool)
4. University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust
5. Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
6. Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust (London)
7. Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Trust (London)
8. Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (London)
9. Oxford Radcliffe Hospital NHS Trust
10. University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust
11. Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust

Proposed options**Option A**

Seven surgical centres at:

- Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
- Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool
- Glenfield Hospital, Leicester
- Birmingham Children's Hospital
- Bristol Royal Hospital for Children
- 2 centres in London (Evelina Children's Hospital (part of Guy's and St Thomas') and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children)

Option B

Seven surgical centres at:

- Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
- Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool
- Birmingham Children's Hospital
- Bristol Royal Hospital for Children
- Southampton General Hospital
- 2 centres in London (Evelina Children's Hospital (part of Guy's and St Thomas') and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children)

Option C

Six surgical centres at:

- Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
- Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool
- Birmingham Children's Hospital
- Bristol Royal Hospital for Children
- 2 centres in London (Evelina Children's Hospital (part of Guy's and St Thomas') and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children)

Option D

Six surgical centres at:

- Leeds General Infirmary
- Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool
- Birmingham Children's Hospital
- Bristol Royal Hospital for Children
- 2 centres in London (Evelina Children's Hospital (part of Guy's and St Thomas') and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children)