



Response to Suzie Hutchinson  
 Little Hearts Matter  
 11 Greenfield Crescent  
 Edgbaston  
 Birmingham  
 B15 3AU

The Rt Hon David Cameron, MP, Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

**Safe and Sustainable Congenital Heart Services for Children**

Twelve years ago Sir Ian Kennedy made recommendations to change the structure of Congenital Cardiac Surgical Services for children in the hope that another crisis in the care of vulnerable children could be avoided. The vision was to build a world class sustainable surgical service able to offer expert treatment and care throughout every region of the country so that no child, wherever they were born, would be denied the expertise seen in some parts of the country. To date there is still no expert service for all.

Throughout the process for change there have been discussions, disagreements and more recently infighting and legal actions which have resulted in the delay and halting of the process, even in the light of all professional bodies, medical and nursing staff, parents and children agreeing that change is essential to ensure safe future care.

It is clear that this essential service is now under immense strain and is beginning to crumble because of the lack of focus created by monumental delay. Units waiting to hear the final designation may be reluctant to invest in either infrastructure or staff until a final decision has been made. There is evidence to suggest that some clinical teams have changed their approach to the care of complex conditions, possibly in an attempt to build their own service or to reduce the work of other units. It appears that some patients are being made to travel hundreds of miles further than necessary as medical teams avoid referring to a unit they perceive as their competition.

In the midst of this delay, there is a child who needs expert care. We know that these children's lives are now at risk.

**As the collective voice of national organisations, unencumbered by a loyalty to a local service we urge politicians, service providers and NHS managers to resolve this crisis as soon as the Independent Reconfiguration Panel has reported on the 30<sup>th</sup> April.**

The provision of a specialist national service from antenatal diagnosis through childhood into adult congenital heart care is essential. A service where doctors return to working with each other, nurses are able to provide focused care, and children and families feel secure that the team that are treating their child have the expertise, confidence and service support needed to offer the best care can be delayed no longer. This is the service promised to not only the children of today but the children to be born in the future.

Yours sincerely

Suzie Hutchinson	Anne Keatley Clarke	Michael Cumper	Hazel Greig Midlane
Little Hearts Matter	Children's Heart Federation	The Somerville Foundation	HeartLine

Penny Green	Julie Wooton	Ian Averis
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