

Sir Jonathan Michael  
Chief Executive  
Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust  
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14 October 2010

Dear Jonathan

As you know, the independent investigation of the children's heart surgery service at the John Radcliffe Hospital in July 2010 recommended the continued suspension of the service pending a decision on its future place within the national service by the *Safe and Sustainable* review.

Having considered the outcome of an independent assessment of all hospitals in England that provide children's heart surgery services in May and June 2010 by an expert panel chaired by Professor Sir Ian Kennedy, I am writing to let you know that on the basis of information currently available the *Safe and Sustainable* review team is minded to recommend to the Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts (JCPCT) that the eventual options for reconfiguration that are put out for public consultation in 2011 do not include the children's heart surgery service at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

The emerging recommendation about the John Radcliffe Hospital was shared with the *Safe and Sustainable* expert steering group today. This group comprises the relevant professional associations. This approach has also been endorsed by South Central Specialised Commissioning Group in their role as local commissioner.

The purpose of the *Safe and Sustainable* assessment process was to assess the ability of the current heart surgical services to meet new quality standards in the future. The outcome of this assessment was that the service at the John Radcliffe Hospital received the lowest ranking assessment of the current 11 centres by a significant margin. The JCPCT will be advised that the service would have such difficulty in meeting the new standards in the future that it should not be included as viable in any potential configuration option.

You were provided with the findings of the expert panel's assessment in August 2010. Key findings included:

- Concerns about governance arrangements
- Limited evidence of leadership within the paediatric cardiac surgery service and of the Trust's strategic vision for the service

- Reliance on informal relationships within clinical networks and limited evidence around how the Trust would establish and effectively lead a more formal clinical network over a larger geographical area
- Limited evidence of the Trust's plans to address the minimum staffing and activity requirements

Notwithstanding these issues we explored whether the location of the John Radcliffe Hospital could justify its inclusion in potential options on the grounds that this would improve access for children and families, but this analysis concluded that access was not improved by the inclusion of the John Radcliffe Hospital in potential viable options.

The JCPCT aims to agree options for reconfiguration in the next few months. These options will be published for a full public consultation in 2011. You should be aware that not being included in options for consultation does not mean that the JCPCT has made any decision about the future of the service at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

A final decision about the future of the paediatric cardiac surgery service at the John Radcliffe Hospital and of the current services at other NHS Trusts in England will not be made by the JCPCT until the outcome of the public consultation has been considered. Parents, NHS staff and the public will have the opportunity to make their views known during the consultation process, including on the future of the service at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

Although the *Safe and Sustainable* public consultation will not start until 2011, we have taken the decision to notify you of the situation without delay so that local parents, patients and local NHS staff are kept informed of emerging recommendations.

I appreciate that the emerging recommendation may come as a disappointment to you and to your staff, and I am conscious of the need to provide staff and parents with some clarity around the potential future role of the service. I will ask the national review team and local specialised commissioners to meet with representatives of the Trust in the next few weeks.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely



Sir Neil McKay CBE  
Chair of the Joint Committee of  
Primary Care Trusts

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Dr Patricia Hamilton CBE, Chair Safe and Sustainable Steering Group  
Dr Lise Llewellyn, Chair South Central Specialised Commissioning Group  
Teresa Moss, Director of National Specialised Commissioning  
Andrea Young, Chief Executive South Central Strategic Health Authority  
Members of the Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts