



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

OFFICE OF LIZ KENDALL MP

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London, SW1A 2NS

7th July 2016

Dear Mr Hunt,

I am writing to raise my concerns about the proposed closure of The East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre (EMCHC) that NHS England has announced today.

Let me start by saying that I have been a long-time supporter of changing the way NHS services are provided in order to improve the quality of patient care, and I fully support the aims and objectives of reconfiguring children's heart services in England so they can be safer and more sustainable in the long term.

I am very concerned, however, that the decision to close the EMCHC service in Leicester was taken without due consideration for the evidence, which shows that, on clinical outcomes, the EMCHC is among the best performing surgical centres in the England. It also has patient and family satisfaction rates of 99%. Clearly this is a successful centre that is very much valued by its users.

Secondly, the negative effects of closing of this service are likely to be much wider than I believe NHS England have considered. Closing the unit would also compromise our paediatric intensive care unit, with a knock on effect on other vital children's services in Leicester.



The EMCHC currently supports 12 Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) beds, which will be lost if the proposed closure goes ahead. The loss of these beds more than halves the PICU beds available in Leicester. Leicester's two PICU Units provide 30 per cent of the PICU capacity across Birmingham, Leicester and Nottingham. Closing one would destabilise the other and result in more children and their families having to travel further for care in times of crisis.

As the Chief Executive of University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust has pointed out, this would most likely have an impact on other specialist paediatric services that require intensive care capacity to function safely. These include: children's general surgery, ear nose and throat surgery, metabolic medicine, fetal and respiratory medicine (for long term ventilated children), children's cancer and our neonatal units. Neighbouring hospitals too would be impacted, including in Burton, Coventry, Kettering, Northampton and Peterborough.

Thirdly, the proposal to close the unit would put at risk Leicester's world-leading Extra Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) service. Leicester's ECMO service is the largest in the country, accounting for 50 per cent of all capacity nationally, and is the only unit providing a national patient transport service. Survival following respiratory ECMO treatment in Leicester last year was 15 per cent higher than for patients treated elsewhere. As well as compromising patient care, its loss would also mean that decades of experience, knowledge and innovation would be lost too.

I would also like to request an urgent meeting with you to discuss this crucial issue in more detail.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Kendall MP
Member of Parliament for Leicester West