

Consultation on Congenital Heart Disease Services for Children and Adults

Policy Context

1. The proposed consultation response is consistent with the Council's vision and goals set out in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan and, in particular, those relating to an active and healthy Gateshead.

Background

2. Congenital heart disease (CHD) is a heart condition or defect that develops in the womb, before a baby is born. CHD is common; it is estimated that between 5 and 9 in every 1,000 babies born in the UK is born with CHD.

3. Services are based around a three-tiered model of care:

Level 1: specialist surgical centres managing the most highly complex diagnostics and care, including all surgery and interventional cardiology. (Newcastle Hospitals is currently commissioned by NHS England to provide Level 1 CHD services)

Level 2: specialist cardiology centres providing the same level of specialist medical care as Level 1, but do not provide surgery or interventional cardiology (except for minor 'hole in the heart' procedures at selected hospitals). These Level 2 hospitals focus on diagnosis, plus ongoing care and management of CHD.

Level 3: local cardiology services in local hospitals run by general paediatricians/cardiologists with a special interest in CHD. They will provide initial diagnosis and ongoing monitoring and care, including joint outpatient clinics with specialists from Level 1 and 2 hospitals.

4. NHS England is currently undertaking a national consultation exercise on congenital heart disease (CHD) services for children and adults. In July 2016, NHS England published a set of proposals regarding the future commissioning of CHD services with a view to ensuring a consistent standard of care across the country. It followed on from the long-running review of services for children (and more recently adults) with congenital heart disease, which has been underway for some 16 years. A key component of NHS England's approach is the implementation of national service standards at every hospital that provides CHD services.

National Service Standards for CHD

5. National service standards for CHD were developed by patients, their families and carers; by surgeons and other specialist doctors and nurses. NHS England acknowledged at the time that implementation of the standards would be a challenge for some hospitals and that it might subsequently prove necessary to

make tough choices when considering how to put them into practice. The effect of NHS England's proposals would be that some hospitals will carry out more CHD surgery, while others, which do not meet the relevant standards, will stop doing this work.

6. Hospitals providing congenital heart disease (CHD) services are required to meet a set of 238 standards. Between January and April 2016 existing providers of CHD services were assessed against key selected standards by a national commissioner-led panel with clinician and patient / public representation. These related to surgical team size/activity levels and the co-location of children's CHD services with other specialist children's services on the same site.

Outcome of the assessment for Newcastle Hospitals

7. The outcome of the assessment for Newcastle Hospitals was that it does not meet the activity requirement (number of procedures) for 2016 and is unlikely to be able to meet the 2021 activity requirement. It was also considered that it did not meet the 2019 paediatric co-location requirements or have a realistic plan to do so by April 2019.
8. The CHD service for both children and adults is located at the Freeman Hospital, which is primarily an adult acute hospital. Relevant children's specialties – paediatric surgery, nephrology and gastroenterology – are located at the Great North Children's Hospital on the RVI site. So while Newcastle Hospitals meets the co-location requirement for 2016 (bedside access within 30 minutes), the consultation document states that it is unlikely to meet the full co-location requirement for 2019 for children's CHD surgery to be on the same site as other children's specialist services.
9. However, the consultation document proposes that Newcastle Hospitals is granted a time-limited exception so that it can continue to be commissioned as a Level 1 CHD centre. It states that Newcastle Hospitals:

“has a unique, strategic position in the NHS in England in delivering care for CHD patients with advanced heart failure, including heart transplantation and bridge to transplant.....Adult CHD patients with end stage heart failure have limited access to heart transplantation, and the unit in Newcastle is recognised as delivering more care to this group than other transplant centres nationally.

.....In addition, the hospital trust is one of only two providing paediatric heart transplantation for the UK (the other is Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust in London).”

10. This does not mean that Newcastle Hospitals will be exempt from meeting the standards in the same way as all other Level 1 surgical centres, but the timeframes for doing so may differ. NHS England will be working closely with the Trust to ensure progress is made towards meeting the standards and to ensure the service is sustainable. These arrangements will be time limited and subject to further review by 2021.

11. One of the key requirements of the proposed standards would be the co-location of Children's Heart Surgery with the Great North Children's Hospital at the Royal Victoria Infirmary. It is understood that Newcastle Hospitals is undertaking a scoping exercise to look at options for co-location. Whatever option is pursued will, in turn, require a longer piece of work to be undertaken so there will be no changes or decisions made for some time.

Consultation

12. The Cabinet Members for Health and Wellbeing have been consulted on the proposed response set out in the attached annex.
13. It is understood that Gateshead Health NHS Trust would also be very supportive of Newcastle Hospitals retaining Level 1 status for CHD services.
14. The deadline set by NHS England for the receipt of responses is 17th July 2017.

Alternative Options

15. The Council is not obliged to make a response; however, it would then not be able to influence the outcome of the consultation which will impact upon the access of local residents to specialist CHD services.

Implications of Recommended Option

16. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that there are no specific financial implications arising from this consultation response.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – None.
- c) **Property Implications** – None.

17. Risk Management Implication – None.

18. Equality and Diversity Implications – None.

19. Crime and Disorder Implications – None.

20. **Health Implications** – The consultation relates to the future commissioning of Level 1 CHD services and, more specifically, the national standards that provider hospitals will be required to meet. As Newcastle Hospitals is currently commissioned by NHS England to provide these services, it will be important that it can continue to do so in the future for the benefit of the local population and that it is given sufficient time to meet the relevant national standards relating to CHD services.

21. **Sustainability Implications** – None.

22. **Human Rights Implications** – None.

23. **Area and Ward Implications** – No specific implications. The proposed response relates to CHD services for all Gateshead residents.

Annex

Proposed Council Response to Consultation on Congenital Heart Disease Services for Children and Adults

1. It is proposed that the Council submits a response to the consultation in support of Newcastle Hospitals continuing to be commissioned to provide Level 1CHD services for children and adults.
2. The response to the consultation would highlight:
 - The importance of retaining specialist Level 1 CHD services in the north east for the benefit of the local population and that Newcastle Hospitals is well placed to continue to provide these services.
 - It is understood that the Trust's outcomes are among the top 5 achieved internationally. Patients are referred to the service from across the country and they are treated by a wide range of experts who work together in specialist teams to deliver innovative and outstanding care.
 - The Trust leads the way in the UK in providing treatment for infants and children with 'end-stage' heart failure. It is one of only two providing paediatric heart transplantation for the UK, which is why its CHD services are currently co-located with the transplant service at the Freeman Hospital. It is understood that the Trust is looking at options for the co-location of children's heart surgery with the Great North Children's Hospital, consistent with the national standards.
 - Adult CHD patients with end stage heart failure have limited access to heart transplantation, and the unit in Newcastle is recognised as delivering more care to this group than other transplant centres nationally.
 - The proposal to grant a time-limited exception to Newcastle Hospitals is supported so that it can continue to be commissioned as a Level 1 CHD centre. It is felt that Newcastle Hospitals should be afforded sufficient time to meet the relevant standards, working with NHS England.