



15th June 2016

Dear Mr Sandhu

Re: NHS England proposals to downgrade the Congenital Heart Disease services at Leicester

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment on the proposals to downgrade Congenital Heart Disease services in Leicester, on behalf of the University of Leicester.

Unequivocally, there are powerful arguments based on the clinical need of the local and regional populations, and based on the impact that any altered service would have on other aspects of the delivery of high calibre medical care. In addition to these clinical arguments, there are massive implications for the Academic Mission in the city – in terms of our research endeavour, training and reputation.

The University of Leicester's strategy, mission, objectives, and workflows, are all closely intertwined with those of the Trust. Our research mission has been particularly successful, as a consequence of an almost seamless progression from scientific discovery through to translation for patient benefit. A strong research mission ensures the very best clinical care, with highest calibre clinicians and access to cutting edge clinical trials. It is for this reason that clinical outcomes are improved around centres of academic excellence such as in Leicester.

Cardiovascular science is a particular strength in Leicester. Cardiovascular disease is one of 3 themes in the National Institute of Health Research Biomedical Research Centre that Leicester was recently awarded (an award made to the Trust-University partnership). In recent months Cardiovascular researchers have secured several major research programme and project funding awards from the British Heart Foundation, National Institute of Health Research, and the UK Research Councils. Our cardiovascular research endeavour is one of, if not the strongest such centres in the UK, and leads research across the world. On several objective measures, cardiovascular disease is the strongest area research activity within the University.

The arguments are just as strong from a teaching and education perspective. Medical students are typically inspired to enter individual specialties based on interactions with particular mentors. In Leicester we have some of the most prominent and successful clinical academics in the UK who are committed to ensuring that there is a continuous and continual pipeline of talented educators and researchers. In recent medical student feedback, the cardiovascular module was one of the most highly rated by our students.



The presence of the cardiovascular disease service offers a unique opportunity to researchers and educators at the University of Leicester and we would unequivocally want to support this and see it remain in the city. There will be a range of lost opportunities if the service was to be lost. The University's commitment to this particular element of the cardiovascular service is emphasised by our recent funding and appointment of a Professor in Children's Heart Surgery.

Children's heart surgery is a jewel in Leicester's clinical crown and the University is delighted to be able to support the arguments to retain the service within Leicester.

If there is anything further I can do to augment these comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Baker', with a horizontal line underneath.

Professor Philip Baker

cc. Aidan Bolger
Alison Poole