

Welcome...

Welcome to the first issue of "Safe and Sustainable" – the stakeholder newsletter for all those with an interest in the children's cardiac surgery services programme.



The aim of the programme is to ensure that the NHS delivers a high quality, safe and sustainable heart surgery service for babies, children, young people and their families. We all want world class care for the children of this country, and especially those with life-threatening heart conditions. This programme will ensure that this care remains the best it can possibly be well into the future.

We want the surgeons who operate on our children and the teams who support them to have the skills and experience that meet the highest national and international standards.

In this newsletter we outline the aims and objectives of the programme and we explain how we are going to develop the paediatric cardiac surgery programme in England. We also explain how you can get involved and feedback your views. Our new, national vision must be created by patients and families, front line NHS staff, and the public all working together.

To help inform the ongoing debate we will be holding a major discussion event on 22 October 2009 in London – the first of a series that will take place over the coming year. Details can be found on the back page.

I hope that you find this newsletter informative and I look forward to hearing your views and seeing you in October.

Patricia Hamilton

Dr Patricia Hamilton

Director of Medical Education for England
Immediate Past President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Chair of the Steering Group for the *Safe and Sustainable* Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Service Programme



Background to the *Safe and Sustainable* programme

The NHS Management Board and the NHS Medical Director – Professor Sir Bruce Keogh – have asked the National Specialised Commissioning Group (NSCG) to examine the way that children’s heart surgery services and interventional cardiology services are provided in England. He has asked us to deliver a sustainable service into the future.

This is called the *Safe and Sustainable* programme, and its motivation is to deliver the best possible care for children and their families.

There are currently 11 children’s heart surgery centres in England. Approximately 30 surgeons conduct children’s heart operations in England and between them they carry out around 3,800 procedures a year. This number is unlikely to change significantly in the years to come.

Children’s heart surgery centres in England currently provide a safe and high quality service for children with heart problems. But several current developments mean they will need to evolve if they are to continue to provide a top quality service into the future.

The *Safe and Sustainable* programme has based its agenda on the following core principles:

- the NHS must provide the very highest standard of care for all children in England who need heart surgery regardless of where they live or which hospital provides their care

- the care that every centre provides must be based around the needs of each child and family, and take account of the transition to adult services
- other than surgery and interventional cardiology all relevant treatment (including follow-up) must be provided as close as possible to where each family lives
- we will develop a set of service specification standards and will ensure that services deliver the best care by meeting these standards.

Over the past few years one particular view has begun to emerge of how we might reconfigure children’s heart surgery centres to address these principles and best meet the needs of children and their families in the future.

In summary this view involves creating larger-volume centres of excellence, increasing the number of surgeons operating in each centre and increasing the total volume of work that each centre undertakes. This view is described elsewhere in this newsletter in an article by Leslie Hamilton, President of the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgery of Great Britain and Ireland.

The purpose of the *Safe and Sustainable* programme is to canvass the opinions of all stakeholders, to weigh the evidence for and against different views and to deliver a safe, sustainable and high quality service into the future.





Programme who's who

The *Safe and Sustainable* programme is run by a Steering Group that has been established by the NSCG. The Steering Group is chaired by Dr Patricia Hamilton, Director of Medical Education for England and the Immediate Past President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Support for the Steering Group is being provided by the National Specialised Commissioning Team.

The *Safe and Sustainable* Steering Group is supported by a Standards Working Group, chaired by Mr William Brawn, a consultant paediatric heart surgeon who works in the NHS.

The recommendations for future service delivery will be developed by local commissioners and health professionals, in consultation with local stakeholders. Four Specialised Commissioning Group (SCG) collaboratives have been established to lead on the process for delivering local recommendations on behalf of all SCGs in their zone (see table). The Steering Group will ensure that the four proposals are consistent with each other and consistent with the overall aims of the *Safe and Sustainable* programme.

SCG Collaborative	Member SCGs	Lead SCG
Northern Zone	North East, North West and Yorkshire & the Humber SCGs	North East SCG
Midlands Zone	East Midlands and West Midlands SCGs	East Midlands SCG
South Eastern Zone	East of England, London and South East Coast SCGs	London SCG
South Western Zone	South Central and South West SCGs	South West SCG

The *Safe and Sustainable* project team – comprising staff from the National Specialised Commissioning Team – is detailed in the table below.

Steve Collins	Deputy Director of Commissioning and Policy	steve.collins@nsscgs.nhs.uk 020 7932 3944
Jeremy Glyde	<i>Safe and Sustainable</i> Programme Manager	jeremy.glyde@ncg.nhs.uk 020 7932 3951
Andy Martin	<i>Safe and Sustainable</i> Assistant Programme Manager	andy.martin@nsscgs.nhs.uk 020 7932 3958
Stuart Pinel	<i>Safe and Sustainable</i> Project Officer	stuart.pinel@nsscgs.nhs.uk 020 7932 3945

The programme project plan sets out a list of key milestones:

Key milestones	Date
Draft service specification standards circulated to stakeholders for comment	Sep 2009
National stakeholder event in London	Oct 2009
Final version of clinical standards circulated	Nov 2009
SCGs submit recommendations for future service delivery	Jul 2010
NHS Management Board considers the recommendations	Jul 2010
Public consultation on the recommendations begins	Sep 2010
Implementation of recommendations begins (subject to the outcome of the consultation)	Jan 2011

In search of consensus

In this first issue of the *Safe and Sustainable* newsletter Leslie Hamilton, the President of the Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery of Great Britain and Ireland and a member of the Steering Group describes his personal search for a consensus view on the future of children's heart surgery services.

The NHS is continually changing and services must change too if we are to provide the highest quality care for patients into the future. Over the past few years I believe a consensus view has begun to emerge on the best future shape of children's heart surgery services in England.

This view involves a higher number of surgical procedures being carried out by each clinical team, with a larger number of surgeons in each surgical centre, and a smaller number of centres.

History of the review

In 2006, Professor Roger Boyle, National Director for Heart Disease and Stroke and Dr Sheila Shribman, National Clinical Director for Children, Young People and Maternity Services chaired a workshop of surgeons and cardiologists, other clinicians, specialised services, commissioners and parent/patient groups. In line with previous reviews it concluded that the current service configuration in England was not sustainable and it reached the unanimous view that we should aim for larger centres of excellence and fewer of them.

Sub-specialisation

Throughout the developed world there is currently a trend towards clinical sub-specialisation. This is widely deemed to be a good thing because it is felt the more a surgeon undertakes specific treatments, the more honed his or her skills become.

Many clinicians argue that if a specialist centre is to be able to treat the full range of children's congenital heart conditions then sub-specialisation means we will need a larger number of sub-specialist consultants working together in a single team in that centre.

Critical mass

There is also a need to ensure that surgeons conducting the enormously complex clinical procedures involved in children's heart surgery always have the experience and expertise required to achieve consistently excellent standards of care.

Many senior clinicians now believe there is a direct correlation between the number of surgical procedures carried out by a team of surgeons and clinical outcomes – this has been demonstrated in other specialties and recent papers focussing on paediatric cardiac surgery have confirmed this finding.

Working hours

In addition the long working hours culture that has been prevalent amongst clinicians over many years is breaking down. Junior doctors now work far fewer hours than they used to. Younger doctors coming into the medical profession are less likely to want to work long hours. I also think we will increasingly see consultant surgeons operating together.

This means we will need larger surgical teams to ensure the provision of a sustainable, on-call rota in each of our children's heart surgery centres. Clinical expertise is currently spread too thinly across the 11 English centres to ensure long-term sustainability. Change must happen now in the interests of our children.

Sustainability

This emerging consensus view envisages a new and more sustainable configuration of services supported by locally delivered, non-surgical services – including follow-up appointments – as close as possible to where the child lives.

Having a larger team of surgeons will allow staged appointments at regular intervals giving us the opportunity to develop a real team approach. It will also allow for the mentoring of newly appointed surgeons by more senior colleagues in a supportive environment and on a practical note, larger teams will help us do away with excessively onerous on-call rotas.

I am convinced that working together as a team is key to delivering good outcomes for patients especially in the field of children's heart surgery.

Support for the *Safe and Sustainable* programme

The Children's Heart Federation (CHF) has announced its support for the *Safe and Sustainable* programme for children's heart surgery services in England.

CHF is the leading children's heart charity and the umbrella body for voluntary organisations representing the needs of children and young people with heart conditions and their families.



“**Anne Keatley-Clarke**, Chief Executive of CHF, said: *“Families will feel more comfortable knowing that a complex procedure such as children's heart surgery is carried out by a team of specialists that is doing hundreds of these procedures a year. Of course, parents want the very best care for their children and they have told us they are willing to travel significant distances in order to get that care. We fully support the Safe and Sustainable programme and look forward to working with the National Specialised Commissioning Group to ensure that every young child who needs heart surgery receives a world-class service.”*



“**Professor Terence Stephenson**, President of Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, has added his support too. He said: *“The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health welcomes this review of children's heart surgery services across England. This is a very specialised area of care and it is important that we have the right number of specialist centres offering the service with the right training in place for tomorrow's paediatric cardiac surgeons. The College believes that this is in the best interests of children and their families.”*



National stakeholder event

On 22 October 2009 we will be holding a national event in London for everyone who cares about the future of children's heart surgery services in England. You will have the opportunity to discuss draft service standards, to shape the work of the programme and to agree on how we take this important piece of work forward. This event will be an invaluable opportunity for parents and carers, NHS staff, the public and other stakeholders to help create the world-class service of the future for our children.

The event will take place at:

**Dexter House
No.2 Royal Mint Court
Tower Hill
London
EC3N 4QN**

Places are limited, so please confirm your attendance as soon as possible by:

- e-mailing robin.matheou@nsscg.nhs.uk
- calling Robin Matheou on 020 7932 9122.

Have your say

The *Safe and Sustainable* programme team is keen to hear from anyone who has views on the future delivery of children's heart surgery services in England.

Please tell us your views. You can do so in the following ways:

- write to Jeremy Glyde, Programme Manager, National Specialised Commissioning Team, 2nd floor, Southside, 105 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QT.
- call Jeremy on 020 7932 3958
- e-mail: ChildHeart@nsscg.nhs.uk