

NHS England decides on the future of congenital heart disease services

In today's Board meeting, NHS England has outlined its plans to implement strict new standards to ensure that children with heart disease receive the best possible care.

Under these standards, 24/7 specialist inpatient care will be provided on-site, without either the patient or the specialist having to travel to another hospital. Moreover, specialists must have a sufficient yearly volume of practice to develop and maintain their skills.

Professor David Anderson, Consultant Heart Surgeon at the Evelina London Children's Hospital and former President of the BCCA has said: "125 really is a minimum number. It equates to three operations a week, per surgeon. Practice makes perfect ... We must set a minimum standard in order to ensure that a surgeon has an acceptable level of skill refined and maintained through regular practice."

The NHS England Board confirmed that Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals, Royal Brompton, and University Hospitals of Leicester will be commissioned to provide level 1 congenital heart services, whereas the Manchester University Hospital will become a level 2 centre.

NHS England also backed the plans for the Royal Brompton to merge its heart services with the Evelina to a new-built unit on the St Thomas site.

ECHO welcomes the fact that a decision was finally reached, after a lengthy process of review and consultation dating back to the Bristol enquiry in the 1990s.

While general outcomes for congenital heart surgery in England are good, the detailed implementation plans that will follow the Board's meeting will ensure that all hospitals meet the highest standard of excellence for treatment and care.

ECHO will continue to work with the Evelina London Children's Hospital, and provide opportunities for members' voices to be heard as the proposed changes are implemented.

Our thoughts are with those heart patients and families whose situations were complicated by today's news.

Read the full NHSE press release [here](#).

Find all Board meeting papers [here](#).

If you would like more information about the NHSE's decision, please [contact](#) our Chief Executive Samantha Johnson.