



The Leader's Room
Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

22nd May 2023

From the Leader of the Council

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Sent via email

Dear Steve,

We are writing to you today regarding the proposed closure of the children's cancer centre at St George's Hospital in Tooting. The centre is one half of the principal treatment centre (PTC) for children's cancer in South London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex, with the other site located at the Royal Marsden Hospital.

Under the current system, the majority of surgery is conducted at St George's alongside expert work done by regional paediatric specialists, with all intensive care for the most critically ill children delivered at the centre. The new proposal would move services from both St George's and the Royal Marsden to the Evelina Children's Hospital in central London.

This is a deeply concerning proposal. St George's has 25 years of experience in delivering top-quality paediatric cancer care with strong, symbiotic and collaborative professional relationships established between different clinical specialists. The Evelina specialises in different areas than the PTC at St George's and the wealth of experience delivering this care cannot easily be replicated at an alternative site overnight. Additionally, the Evelina does not provide neurosurgery or oncology services and would rely on surgeons from St George's travelling to the hospital to conduct these services. This is an impractical solution to a key issue, with one in four children with cancer having a neuro-oncological condition.

Furthermore, parents of children with cancer have also made clear to NHS England that it is far easier, more comfortable and safer to take their child to the hospital via car rather than public transport. I am sure you can appreciate the difficulties associated with driving and parking in central London, and keeping the PTC at St George's will ensure easy car access with dedicated spaces for child cancer patients.

From a financial perspective, it is far more prudent to keep the children's centre at St George's, as a large part of the service already exists there and additional office space can be converted into further facilities as needed. Fewer staff members will need to be moved to central London, saving both money and significant disruption. I understand that the cost of redeveloping St George's to accommodate the whole facility is estimated at £30 million whereas it would be three times more expensive, at around £90 million, to relocate all service to the Evelina. These figures are currently not being considered by NHS England as part of the proposal.

On a further financial point, moving services from St George's to the Evelina could create a £2 million funding shortfall, as children's cancer services are not stand-alone and rely on paediatric specialists who operate across a wide variety of major trauma cases. When relocating patients to the Evelina, and thereby removing the associated funding, St George's will still have to retain the relevant staff members for their other duties. This will result in the hospital having to make cuts to other vital services for patients in the local area in order to accommodate the shortfall.

We are aware that NHS England will be consulting on the proposals, publicly and through joint overview and scrutiny committee arrangements. Clearly we will carefully consider the details of any further information made available as part of the consultation, but at this stage we felt it important to bring to your attention our significant concerns.

It has been admitted that it is viable for services to be consolidated at St George's and it is our view that this is the best option for staffing, patient care and financial concerns. We urge you to reconsider.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Hogg
Leader of Wandsworth Council



Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP
Member of Parliament for Tooting