



Damian Hinds
MP for East Hampshire

News release

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Damian Hinds Speaks up for the Children's Cardiac Unit at Southampton

Speaking in the Commons debate on the review led by the Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts into the reconfiguration of specialist children's heart surgery units in hospitals, Damian Hinds said

"The review document is called "Safe and Sustainable", and that is absolutely the right title for it. It is worth repeating: this is about saving lives, not about saving money.

"We must bear in mind the link between scale and quality and between quality and safety. The challenge was summed up best by the statement from the Royal College of Surgeons, that although the country has the right number of surgeons carrying out these complex operations, they are too thinly spread. Change is clearly needed."

The case of Southampton General Hospital and its children's cardiac surgery centre has come under particular scrutiny as it is recommended for closure and relocation in three of the four possible outcomes of the review.

Damian Hinds continued

"Coincidentally, in the last three weeks my family has had occasion to rely on the paediatric intensive care unit and surgery at Southampton General hospital where we benefited from outstanding care. This was not heart surgery, but the experience gave me plenty of cause to reflect on the value of not just convenience and location but, above all, quality of care. The experience also taught me something about the interconnection between services."

While supporting the need for a review and to maximise the life saving resources of the NHS, Damian Hinds called for the criteria used by the review to be reconsidered. He also called for options to be considered other than the four recommendations of the review.

"All the criteria set out in the review document have a role to play, but in my view the most important criterion of all must be quality, and I do not think that that comes across as much as it should in the review. How can it, given that the centre in Southampton is ranked second out of the 11 in the country for quality and its retention appears in only one of the four options? Other factors, such as the co-location of heart surgery with other essential children's services, intensive care and the capacity for emergency retrieval, have not been given sufficient weight.

“I do think that Southampton has a particularly strong case based on the excellence of its clinical record. I strongly support the drive for us not to be restricted only to the four options in the review, considering the additional evidence that has come to light during its course.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The full text of the debate and Damian Hinds' speech can be found at

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110623/debtext/110623-0002.htm#11062335000003>

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