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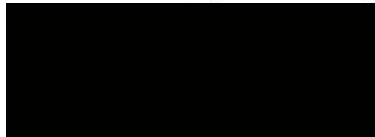
Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

Tel: 020 7210 4850

Ms Diana Dakin

Chair

Matlock Hospitals League of Friends



9 February 2012

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Dear Ms Dakin,

Thank you for your letter of 25 January to the Secretary of State, Andrew Lansley, about the Darley Birth Centre, Matlock. I have been asked to reply.

The Government supports the provision of consistently excellent maternity services, which focus on improving both outcomes for women and babies, and women's experience of care.

The Government is also committed to devolving power to local communities, to the people, patients, GPs and councils who are best placed to determine the nature of their local NHS services. The Government has pledged that, in future, all service changes must be led by clinicians and patients, not be driven from the top down. To this end, the Secretary of State has outlined new, strengthened criteria that decisions on NHS service changes are expected to meet. They must focus on improving patient outcomes, consider patient choice, have support from GP commissioners and be based on sound clinical evidence.

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Given the concerns you have raised, Departmental officials have contacted the Midlands and East Strategic Health Authority.

The Department is advised that the NHS in Derbyshire reviewed the provision of stand alone birth centres in Buxton (Corbar Birth Centre) and Matlock (Darley Birth Centre) as part of its maternity and children's Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) programme. The primary care trust (PCT) has undertaken a review of all services currently commissioned to ensure, where possible, all services either improve or sustain quality, but are also cost effective, equitable and meet the needs of the local population.

At its meeting on 25 May 2011, the Cluster Board of Derbyshire County PCT and Derby City PCT approved a period of public engagement. This engagement was to ask patients, the public, local GPs and other interested parties across Derbyshire for their views on the services and how the local NHS can make sure they represent fair access to care and value for money. These views have been considered alongside clinical views, affordability and the need to promote fair access to services.

At its meeting on 7 December 2011, the PCT Cluster Board voted unanimously to decommission deliveries from the two birth centres with effect from 1 July and re-commission local ante and post-natal care.

NHS organisations are legally required to consult Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) on proposed changes to health services which are considered, by an OSC, to constitute a substantial variation or substantial development to a health service. If an OSC is not satisfied with the consultation process or believes that the proposed changes are not in the interests of local health services, it may refer the scheme to the Secretary of State for Health.

The Derbyshire County PCT has engaged with Derbyshire Dales District Council OSC throughout this review, most recently attending the OSC meeting on December 2011 regarding the PCT Board's decision of 7 December 2011. The OSC decided not to refer this matter to the Secretary of State.

While I recognise that this is not the reply you may have wished for, I hope that it has clarified the Department's understanding of the situation.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Dove  
Customer Service Centre