

Written Ministerial Statement

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Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Congenital Cardiac Services: Consultation on International Working Group's Recommended Future Model

Published at 12.00 noon on Monday 3 November 2014

Mr Wells (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Members will recall that in my Statement to the Assembly on 14 October 2014 I stated that I intended to announce details of the public consultation on the future model for congenital cardiac services for the population of Northern Ireland as recommended by the International Working Group (IWG). I am honouring that commitment today through the publication of the consultation document by my Department for a 12 week period of public consultation ending on Friday 23 January 2015.

While I am satisfied that the IWG has fulfilled its Terms of Reference, before I make my final decision on whether to accept the recommendations, I want to hear the views of patients and their families who use this service, the clinicians who provide the service and the Northern Ireland public who have been engaged in the discussion on the future of this service.

This consultation provides the public with an opportunity to give its views on each of the IWG's 14 recommendations. It is intended that the consultation document will be publicised by way of a press release which will be highlighted on my Department's website. The consultation document provides a response form to enable those who wish to do so, to send their views to the Department. In addition to this, my Department will hold a number of public consultation meetings around Northern Ireland, to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to put their views directly to my Department.

In the meantime, while the consultation is ongoing, I have instructed my officials to work with health service commissioners and providers to immediately plan for the implementation of the service model recommended by the IWG. I will await the outcome of the consultation before making my final decision on whether to implement the IWG's recommended service model. My decision to proceed with the planning however is in keeping with the principle that precautions should be applied given the vulnerability of the sustainability of this service at the Belfast Trust.