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Date: 27 November, 2012

Dear Mr Flynn

Thank you for your letter of 15 November on behalf of Belfast City Council regarding the provision of paediatric cardiac surgery services in Northern Ireland. I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Minister.

The Minister has not reached any decision on the provision of paediatric cardiac surgical services for the population of Northern Ireland. On 25 September he announced the commencement of a 12 week period of consultation in relation to the future delivery of this service for Northern Ireland. The consultation is being carried out by the Health and Social Care Board and will run until 21 December 2012, following which the Minister will take a decision on the future provision of this service for Northern Ireland.

The document, 'Consultation on the future delivery of Paediatric Cardiac Surgery and Interventional Cardiology for the population of Northern Ireland', can be obtained from the Health and Social Care Board's website at

http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/consult/PCCS_Consultation/25-09-2012%20-%20PCCS%20Consultation%20Document%20-%20PDF.pdf

It is important that everyone carefully considers the standards proposed in the consultation document and uses the opportunity to put forward their views. The document includes an option for an all-Ireland model. The consultation responses will help inform the way forward in identifying the preferred service model for children from Northern Ireland who need specialist cardiac care.

The Minister hopes to be in a position to announce his decision early in 2013.

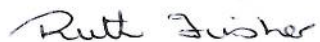
In parallel with the consultation process the Health and Social Care Board will continue to complete a robust analysis of the current transport arrangements for children including those with congenital cardiac disease, to determine the best way

to deliver these services. The Minister wants to have this information available before he makes a final decision on the future model for Paediatric Cardiac Surgery and Interventional Cardiology in Northern Ireland.

The Minister fully appreciates that parents and children living with congenital cardiac problems may be anxious about any changes and how these might impact on the care provided to them. He wants to reassure families that his ultimate aim is to ensure a safe, sustainable service into the future.

I hope this is helpful and would encourage you to respond to the public consultation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ruth Fisher