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Councillor Bryan Cope  
Vice Chairman  
Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Legal and Democratic Services  
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*Dear Bryan,*

**CHANGES TO WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES AT MAIDSTONE  
AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS NHS TRUST**

I refer to your Committee's letter of 21 September 2010 and your subsequent letter of 30 November 2010 about proposals for changes to women's and children's services at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

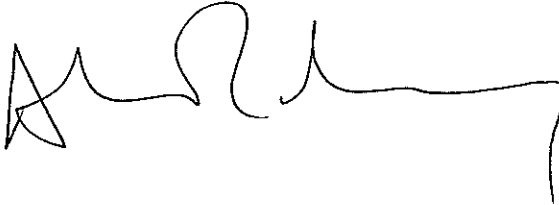
As you are aware, after accepting advice from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP), I asked the local NHS to carry out further work and they reported to me on 30 September. Going forward I have asked the local NHS to ensure they continue to engage with all stakeholders as is appropriate, including your Committee as changes to services continue to be implemented at the Pembury hospital and the midwife led unit at Maidstone is developed.

I would expect NHS South East Coast to publish its report in its entirety in due course.

I am asking the SHA, PCT and Trust to reconsider the level of paediatric input to the A&E and engage with GPs as the future commissioners of services regarding the appropriate level of specialist input. This should not prejudice the centralisation of inpatient services as scheduled.

My conclusion does not prejudice any future decisions made by local commissioners. If in future GPs as commissioners assess that a need for services at Maidstone is unmet, then it will be their prerogative to seek to redesign and commission services on that basis.

I am copying this letter to Candy Morris, Chief Executive of NHS South East Coast.

*Yours ever,*  


**ANDREW LANSLEY CBE**