

**13 MARCH 2024**

**Twickenham MP Munira Wilson calls for vital children’s cancer services to remain at St George’s  
*Raises concerns about transparency of decision in debate in Parliament on 13 March***

Leading a debate in Parliament on Wednesday 13 March on the future of children’s cancer services in southwest London and surrounding areas, Twickenham MP Munira Wilson will call for these vital services to remain at St George’s Hospital in Tooting, rather than move to the Evelina Hospital in Lambeth.

Munira’s debate comes a day before NHS England is expected to issue a decision on the proposals, following a consultation last year that received over 2,500 responses from clinicians, patients, family members and organisations including the Children’s Cancer and Leukaemia Group. In the debate, Munira will also raise concerns about the transparency of the decision, which affects children’s cancer services in southwest London and surrounding areas including Surrey, Sussex, Medway, and Kent.

“The Evelina is a world-class hospital where my own children have received excellent treatment and care, but there are myriad reasons why St George’s is best placed to offer vital children’s cancer services,” said Munira. “One of these is that, over the past 25 years, St George’s has built unparalleled specialist expertise in treating children with cancer, and it’s crucial that the institutional knowledge and networks that have been built over decades are not jeopardised.”

In Wednesday’s debate, Munira will share the story of two children who were treated for cancer at St George’s: Jackson, who was diagnosed with leukaemia when he was just two years old and finished treatment in 2023, and teenager Zoe, who was treated by the team at St George’s when she was just four, and now dreams of becoming a children’s nurse.

Munira will argue that the institutional knowledge and expertise that has been developed by St George’s over 25 years, in partnership with the Royal Marsden, makes it best placed to deliver children’s cancer services. This includes St George’s expertise in neurosurgery, a service required by a quarter of all child cancer patients, and which is not provided by the Evelina. Of the 20 surgeons in the country specialising in this area, three are at St George’s.

Another concern is that transferring staff to another hospital presents a considerable risk that services such as surgery and pathology could be negatively affected at St George’s, with serious consequences for patients across southwest London and the other regions that St George’s serves.

The families of patients, meanwhile, benefit from the better travel options to St George’s. Parents with an immuno-suppressed child rightly worry about transporting their child safely, and traveling into central London by car or on public transport can be notoriously difficult and stressful. St George’s, on the other hand, is easily accessible by car and has good transport links to surrounding areas – making journeys easier for parents and carers.

These concerns were recently shared in a joint letter to MP Victoria Atkins, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, that was signed by Twickenham MP Munira Wilson, alongside Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey, MP for Kingston and Surbiton, and Sarah Olney, MP for Richmond.

Finally, Munira will raise concerns about the transparency of the decision-making and how NHS England has handled the process, including the fact that NHS England publicly expressed a preference for the transfer of services to the Evelina before the consultation responses had been received. Munira will cite feedback from organisations like Healthwatch Richmond, who said they could not submit a response to the consultation as it “fails the legal test” for consultations, and “fails to identify the material unintended consequences of the move on staffing, patients and families and on the incumbent [hospital].”

“We must not lose sight of who should be at the heart of this decision - the children and families who are facing the most frightening time in their lives,” said Munira. “I hope that NHS England will prove it has given this decision the due care and attention it deserves, rather than deliver the decision to transfer services to the Evelina as a fait accompli.”

Munira added: “If NHS England announces on Thursday that it intends to transfer children’s cancer services to the Evelina from St George’s, I will be asking the Health Secretary to intervene.”