

REPORT FROM THE WORKING PARTY SET UP BY THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND ON NEONATAL AND INFANT CARDIAC SURGERY: SUPRA REGIONAL FUNDING AND DESIGNATION

June 1992

The Working Party was set up at the suggestion of the President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Sir Terence English, who requested Professor David I Hamilton to act as Chairman. Sir J Keith Ross, Mr Jaroslav Stark and Dr Stewart Hunter formed the Working Party with him. Meetings were held on Tuesday 18 February 1992 and on Friday 8 May 1992 at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. The working Brief was to report on the present throughput of work in Neonatal and Infant Cardiac Surgery in the designated Units in England. This had become particularly necessary as Harefield had been recognised by the Department of Health as the tenth Centre, in addition to the nine Centres originally recognised in 1983. Leicester and Oxford have both applied to the Department of Health for consideration for recognition in addition. As the maximum number of Centres that can be accepted for Supra Regional funding is nine, it has become necessary to reconsider this matter.

The Value of Supra Regional Designation and Funding

The previous Working Party on this subject reported as follows in July 1989. Supra Regional funding has brought benefits, particularly in staffing levels, in some of the designated Units. Centralisation of cases, particularly in the rarer diagnostic groups, has occurred, and during this time surgical results have improved in this age range. Generally, the greater the experience of a Unit, in numbers of cases operated, the lower has been the Hospital and 30 day mortality in these young children.

Secondly, it was recommended that where staffing levels were below those required to run a 24 hour service throughout the year, remedial action should be taken by Local Health Authorities, and new appointments should be made. Additional Consultant Cardiac Surgeons with paediatric experience have been appointed in some Centres during the past 2 years.

Following the first meeting of the present Working Party in February 1992, a questionnaire was sent out to the ten designated Centres and to Oxford and Leicester in addition. This requested returns for annual figures and mortality for the years 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991, for all Neonates and Infants (under 1 year of age) who underwent open and closed heart surgery, listed separately. The same information for children and adolescents over 1 year of age (up to 18 years) was requested to provide appropriate background information about departmental workloads. The staffing levels at Consultant, Senior Registrar, Registrar and more junior levels, in Surgery, Cardiology and Anaesthetics were requested.