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CONFIDENTIAL

Dr J Roylance
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Dear Dr Roylance

NEONATAL AND INFANT CARDIAC SURGERY AT BRISTOL ROYAL INFIRMARY

We have spoken on more than one occasion about concerns that have been expressed about the results of neonatal and infant cardiac surgery at Bristol Royal Infirmary.

From information received, including your letter of 12 September, I had understood that steps had been taken to rectify the problem by the appointment of a new paediatric cardiac surgeon the transfer the service to the Children's Hospital. I had assumed, mistakenly it would appear, that (at least high risk) neonatal and infant surgery would have ceased pending the arrival of the new consultant and the transfer.

As you know I learnt last week that, far from this being the case, neonatal and infant cardiac surgery has continued at Bristol Royal Infirmary. We spoke on the evening of 11th January about the proposal to perform a "switch" procedure on a child. I suggested that under the circumstances it might not be advisable to proceed. The operation was performed the following day and the child died. We spoke again following that extremely unfortunate incident about the necessity of setting up an immediate Enquiry using outside experts. The Enquiry was intended to determine firstly whether the "switch" procedure had been performed to an acceptable standard, (i.e. whether or not the death was avoidable), and secondly whether the results of an audit of neonatal and infant cardiac surgery, made the decision to operate reasonable or not.

I now learn that subsequent to that conversation two more children have been operated on with unfortunate results. Very serious concerns about the service have now been expressed to me by both staff of the Bristol Royal Infirmary and outside cardiac surgeons. There is clearly a growing belief that childrens' lives may have been put at unnecessary risk. Until such doubts can be resolved, it would be extremely inadvisable to undertake any further neonatal or infant cardiac surgery.