



**Returning a children's service to the Alexandra Hospital**

*Rachel Maclean*

Working hard for Redditch & the Villages

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## Foreword

In 2016, inpatient paediatric services at the Alexandra Hospital were ‘temporarily’ closed and transferred to Worcestershire Royal Hospital ‘under emergency measures’ as a result of safety concerns.

Following a consultation process, which in my opinion ignored the overwhelming view of the people of Redditch who favoured not transferring services to Worcester, in July 2017, local health bosses approved the Future of Acute Hospitals in Worcestershire Review which confirmed in-patient paediatric services would remain permanently centralised at Worcestershire Royal.

Shortly after I was first elected in June 2017, I said: **“I cannot support any proposal that removes services from Redditch, in favour of having them delivered at the Worcestershire Royal, against the wishes of Redditch people.”**

I am continuously fighting for a brighter future for the Alex, and in 2019 I was re-elected to fight to return a maternity and children’s service to Redditch’s hospital. Having secured 63% of the vote, I have an overwhelming mandate from the people of Redditch to fight for the return of services.

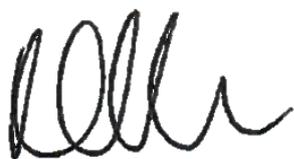
Although there were times during the pandemic where it is was not right for me to distract local health bosses from doing everything they could to save lives, my team and I continued to focus on how we can return a children’s service to the Alex.

With record funding for our NHS and the Government recruiting more doctors and nurses, this document sets out why I believe returning a children’s service is possible.

I’ve also researched how children’s services are provided in other parts of England to demonstrate it is possible for children’s services to be provided at more than one hospital.

I’ve never promised it would be easy to return services to the Alex, but I’ve never given up on anything in my life and I’m not about to start now.

Thank you for reading this document.



**Rachel Maclean MP**  
Member of Parliament for Redditch



## Foreword by Kirsty Southwell

We definitely need our children's services back. It's vital, especially if our children become unwell. It's closer for us all to get to the Alexandra Hospital.

I know this campaign has been done before, but it's relevant now more than ever as more babies have been born, there are houses being built and lots of families are moving into our town. It's vitally important we have our children's and maternity services back as children and babies deteriorate faster than us adults.

Pregnant women need to have local services available to them to ensure, if the worst does happen, then there's someone there to help support their needs. As you know from my experience of losing Finley, it was a hard journey to go through.

No one wants to travel 40 minutes away when you've been told the devastating news that your baby has died. Please have that human touch and see that vital services are very much wanted and needed.

All the services shouldn't have been taken away in the first place. Our children's lives are at risk especially travelling 40+ minutes away to another hospital.

Like others have expressed their concerns when a child becomes unwell or have been in an accident the closest hospital is the Alexandra.

I know sometimes it can't be helped by going to other hospitals, but we really need our children's services here along with maternity, the trauma unit and many more.

Our children's lives are at risk, especially when we have a perfectly good hospital minutes away from us. We need to make a stand now for the return of our vital services.

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### Kirsty Southwell

Redditch mum



## **My Long-Term Plan for the future of the Alex**

Ever since I was first elected in 2017 I have been fighting for our hospital.

It continues to be the number one issue for my constituents, and it remains my top priority.

I have long argued that the Alex has a bright future ahead of it. This is clearly demonstrated by the investment we're seeing in our hospital.

The Garden Suite is being returned to the Alex, a Breast Imaging Unit has opened, the state-of-the-art Rory the Robot has been installed and we're getting a multi-million operating theatre complex. The £33 million purpose-built extension to the Alex will contain seven new operating theatres which will operate alongside the hospital's current theatres.

We can both welcome investment in the Alex and at the same time continue to fight to return services to our hospital.

My reports into returning a maternity service and children's service to the Alex form part of my Long-Term Plan for the Alex which will be published in due course.

It's clear for all to see that the Alex can be better utilised and relieve the pressures on Worcestershire Royal Hospital.

This long-term plan will refresh the 12-point plan I released in 2017. We're in a different place now compared to where we were 5 years ago, and so it's right we look to the future with a new and updated vision for our hospital.



## **What am I calling for?**

Like you, I want the Alex to be a hospital where the **A&E once again treats children** and a hospital with an **inpatient children's ward which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

As you know, in 2016, inpatient paediatric services at the Alex were 'temporarily' closed and transferred to Worcestershire Royal Hospital 'under emergency measures' as a result of safety concerns.

This is the situation I inherited when I was first elected as your MP in 2017.

Since then I have heard from countless parents who have had to travel all the way to Worcestershire Royal when their child is seriously ill or injured.

This 40 minute journey, the time it takes to get from the Alex to Worcestershire Royal, is unacceptable and it has to change.

## **The Alex's A&E**

Currently the A&E at the Alex does not treat children.

If your child is seriously ill or injured and you call 999 your child will be blue-lighted to Worcestershire Royal. And if you take your child to the Alex your child will be stabilised and then transferred via ambulance to Worcestershire Royal.

If we're to have a 24/7 inpatient children's ward once again at our hospital then we will need an A&E which can treat children.

We're all well aware of the pressures facing the A&E at Worcestershire Royal, and we also know the A&E at the Alex consistently performs better.

We therefore must return to a situation where our hospital's A&E treats children. This service must exist if we're to have a 24/7 inpatient children's ward which children can be transferred to from the A&E.

The next section of this report will clearly set out how other Acute Trusts across England provide children's services at more than one acute hospital.

## **How do Acute Trusts provide children's services in other parts of England?**

As part of my report, I looked at how several different Acute Trusts that serve similar population sizes to Worcestershire deliver children's services.

I found multiple examples of comprehensive children's services being delivered across more than one hospital.

One such example was **North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust** which serves a population of around **700,000** - which is relatively similar to what Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust serves (around 600,000) - yet it delivers a much better service for children in the area.

## **What children's services does NWAFT provide?**

North West Anglia is served by two main hospitals, Peterborough City Hospital and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

### **Peterborough City Hospital:**

- **A&E which treats children.**
- **Amazon Children's Ward:** provides a 24/7 comprehensive paediatric service both for elective and emergency care for all children up to the age of 16.
- **Jungle Assessment Unit:** Children are referred to this unit usually by their GP or by the A&E and are assessed by a paediatrician and a registered children's nurse prior to being discharged home or admitted to Amazon Ward.
- **Rainforest Outpatients:** provides outpatient care with children's nurses and health-care support workers. There is a specialist hospital play team, specialist dieticians and specialist physiotherapists.
- **Paediatric Dietetics Department:** support children with a variety of conditions including Coeliac disease, Food Allergies, Cystic fibrosis, feeding difficulties, cardiac problems, premature babies and children with neuro disabilities along with patients requiring tube feeding. Cover wards at both Peterborough and Hinchingsbrooke Hospitals.

## Hinchingbrooke Hospital:

- **A&E which treats children.**
- **Holly Ward:** the ward provides a 24/7 comprehensive paediatric service both for elective and emergency care for all children up to the age of 17.
- **Day Case Unit:** provides a comprehensive paediatric service for elective day case surgery provided by surgical specialities from within Hinchingbrooke.
- **Paediatric Assessment Unit:** provides a comprehensive paediatric service both for elective and emergency care for all children up to the age of 17. Open daily from 8.30am to 9pm, 365 days a year.
- **Children's Outpatients:** provides a range of child and family service, including general paediatric clinics and rapid access clinics.

## What staffing numbers are required at each hospital?

The tables below outline the staffing levels required to run this type of service for each hospital.

### Peterborough City Hospital:

Nursing and clerical staff – does not include medical staffing, secretarial staffing or dietetics staffing (not whole time equivalent or establishment to provide service)

	Band 7 or above	Band 6 including specialist nurses	Band 4 & 5	Band 2 & 3	Admin and clerical
Amazon and Jungle	4	16	33	6	2
Rainforest	5	4	2	10	1
Play Team	0	1	3	4	0

### Hinchingbrooke Hospital:

	Band 7 or above	Band 6 including specialist nurses	Band 4 & 5	Band 2 & 3	Admin and clerical
Holly, PAU and Day case	1	9	15	8	0
CYP OPA	0	1	1	3	0
Play Team	0	0	1	2	0

Source: Freedom of Information Request

## How much does it cost to deliver the children’s services at both hospitals?

In the table below you can see that the combined cost of running the service across both hospitals is around **£7,384,000**.

	Pay	Non Pay
	£k	£k
Amazon Ward	3,422	485
Jungle Assessment Unit	307	32
Play team	279	4
Rainforest OP	1,207	3
Holly Ward	964	52
Paediatrics Dietetics	86	
PAU	64	3
Paediatric OP HH	463	13

**Source: Freedom of Information Request**

Both of these hospitals have **24/7 children’s wards** as well as other units across both hospitals to help provide a fully linked up service, whilst maintaining the ability for patients to be seen in both hospitals at any time.

Furthermore, both of these hospitals provide both elective and emergency paediatric care, meaning those seeking treatment can do so with the peace of mind they will not have to travel a long distance to receive it.

And herein lies the crucial difference with the services we currently have on offer in Redditch, and why I believe it is so crucial we see improvements made here.

It is not right that anxious parents should face the prospect of having to travel long distances to get the treatment their child deserves, especially in the case of an emergency.

Returning children’s services to the Alex and delivering an ambitious, comprehensive system such as in the example I have outlined above, would both make use of an untapped resource we have in the form of our local hospital and help put parents mind at ease that their child will get the most efficient care possible.

## Is Redditch a growing town?

The short answer is yes, Redditch's population is continuing to grow and has grown since I was first elected as your MP in 2017.

According to the 2021 Census, in Redditch, the population size has increased by **3.3%** from around **84,200** in 2011 to **87,000** in 2021.

**Source:** <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000236/>

This means Redditch's population has increased faster than had been projected. **Source:** <https://bit.ly/3QVBVcm>

## Conclusion

As part of our ambitious and positive vision for the future of Redditch by unlocking its full potential, we need a hospital where children can be treated, especially as Redditch continues to grow.

We want people to come and live and work in Redditch, and with a hospital with an A&E which treats children, as well as a 24/7 inpatient children's ward, I'm certain this would encourage more people to consider living in our wonderful town.



## What is the Government doing to recruit more doctors and nurses?

Central to making the case to return services to the Alex is the need for more healthcare professionals to be recruited.

We are making progress on this. We're now in a position where there are more doctors and nurses working for Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust than when I was first elected.

There are over **21,000** more doctors and almost **17,000** more nurses on hospital wards across the country. **Source:** <https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/nhs>

Below I will set out what the Government is doing to recruit more doctors, nurses and how this strengthens our case for services to be returned to the Alex.

### Nurses

The Government's commitment is to recruit **50,000 more nurses** in addition to the 7,500 further nurse associates announced previously. **Source:** <https://bit.ly/3AwoMRt>

As of June 2022, the number of NHS nurses had increased by over **27,000 FTE** from the year before. **Source:** PRU

Nursing students receive a non-repayable maintenance grant of at least **£5,000**. **Source:** <https://bit.ly/3OONuQP>



### What is being done in Worcestershire to train more doctors locally?

After my fellow Worcestershire MPs and I successfully lobbied the Government, the University of Worcester's Three Counties Medical School will be accepting its first 20 students this September.

Training our own doctors in Worcestershire will be game-changing as it will ensure the County retains more doctors to work in our hospitals, rather than losing them to places such as Bristol and Birmingham.

In July 2020, the University of Worcester received the largest allocation of additional places for health professional students in the UK, educating an extra 400 nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

**How does recruiting more doctors, nurses and midwives support the campaign to return a maternity and children's service to the Alex?**

Services were removed due to staff shortages and recruitment challenges which ultimately led to safety concerns and the centralisation of services to Worcestershire Royal.

A key factor in making the strongest possible case to return these services to the Alex will be recruitment and increasing the NHS workforce.

With 27,000 more nurses working in the NHS compared to last year and with trainee doctors commencing their training at the University of Worcester's Three Counties Medical School in September, this provides a strong case for once again providing a maternity service at the Alex.

## **How record amounts of funding for our NHS strengthens the case for services to be returned to the Alex**

This Conservative Government is investing record amounts of funding into our NHS.

The NHS budget will go up by **£33.9 billion** by 2023-24. That's the biggest cash boost in its history. **Source:** <https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/nhs>

Despite difficult financial circumstances, **NHS investment has increased every year since 2010.**

I'm proud to have supported and voted for this historic investment in our National Health Service.

With historic investments in our NHS, which the Alex is benefitting from, I believe the funding is there to provide a children's service at the Alex.



## **Why should the Trust listen to the people of Redditch and return a children's service to the Alex?**

Given the evidence set out in this document, I believe there is a strong case to return a children's service to the Alex.

As you will have read, there are examples across England where Acute Trusts provide children's services at more than one of their hospitals. The strongest example is North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust.

North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust (NWAFT) has shown us that it is possible to provide children's services at more than one hospital, and this is especially pertinent given NWAFT and Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust serve similar population sizes.

Our argument to return services to the Alex is strengthened by the Government's record and historic investments in our NHS which I have supported and voted for.

We're also seeing more doctors and nurses being recruited. We have a medical school in Worcester which will be training doctors, and the University of Worcester received the largest allocation of additional places for health professional students in the UK.

Again, this is central to our campaign to return services. The Acute Trust will need the staff to be able to safely operate these services. Patient safety must always come first.

Just as I have done with my report into returning a maternity service to the Alex, I will be presenting this document to the Chief Executive and Board of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

As I have a democratic mandate from the people of Redditch to fight to return a children's service to the Alex, the Acute Trust must continue to engage with me and set out a detailed response to the evidence and data presented in this document.

This fight will not be easy, and we will continue to be frustrated, but I refuse to lose hope.

**I've never given up on anything in my life and I'm not about to start now.**



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**Rachel Maclean MP**

Member of Parliament for Redditch