

Proposed Cheshire & Merseyside Paediatric Radiotherapy Service Transfer

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Radiotherapy

- Radiotherapy is the use of radiation to treat cancer. The treatment is usually given as part of a multidisciplinary protocol along with systemic anti cancer treatment and/or surgery
- There are two main types of radiotherapy – x-ray (photon) and proton beam
- X-ray or photon radiotherapy uses high energy x-rays
- Proton Beam Therapy (PBT) uses a beam of high energy protons. Due to the way in which protons travel through tissue, there may be less dose deposited to nearby normal tissues compared with X-rays which may result in a reduced risk of late side effects. PBT is most useful in the treatment of certain paediatric tumours although X-ray radiotherapy is still useful in some situations.

Background Information and Current Service Challenges

- Due to the increase in use of Proton Beam Therapy (PBT), the numbers of children requiring photon radiotherapy are dwindling (and expected to reduce further in the future) (makes it difficult to develop and improve the service to meet the demands of modern radiotherapy practice)
- PBT is only delivered at two sites in England – The Christie and University College Hospital, London
- Paediatric radiotherapy is a low volume, highly complex speciality. For example, younger patients require daily general anaesthetics over a period of up to 6 weeks for effective immobilisation.
- For the Cheshire and Merseyside area, the number of children requiring photon radiotherapy is approximately 15 patients per year. For the last 3 years, there has been approximately 1 child per year from Sefton who required photon radiotherapy. These patients are referred via the Alder Hey Paediatric Oncology MDT
- Currently there is one consultant offering the service at CCC who works mainly at the PBT centre at the Christie. There is no peer review of radiotherapy plans (a mandatory requirement), no cross cover, little potential for service development or running radiotherapy trials etc. Due to the small numbers of patients (<20 per year), attract appropriately trained staff and maintain their competencies in the future.

Planned Future Service Arrangements

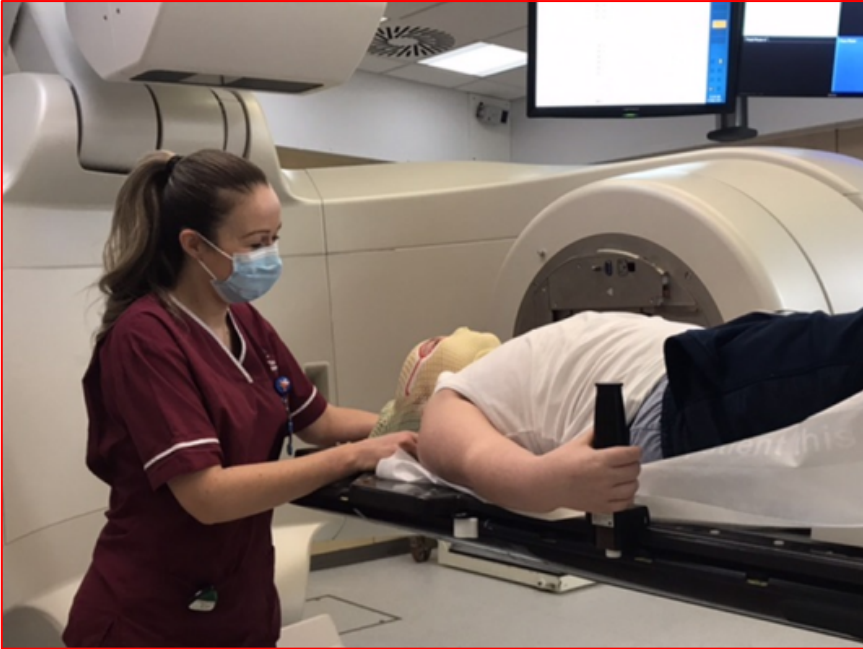
- The assertion is paediatric radiotherapy would be a better, more sustainable service in future if all North West patients were treated by a single service at The Christie in Manchester
- Patients and their families would have access to all the wraparound care and support as well as a full paediatric radiotherapy team at The Christie
- NHS England specialised commissioners, the Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance, the regional Radiotherapy Operational Delivery Network, Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System and Greater Manchester Health and Social Care partnership are all supportive of action being taken to stabilise the current service

Clinicians believe this would deliver the following benefits for Cheshire and Merseyside children who require X-ray radiotherapy:

- A wider team of specialist clinical oncologists (The Christie has five specialist consultant oncologists) who can pool knowledge of these rare and complex cancers and contribute to peer review and advising on radiotherapy plans
- There is a critical mass of patients which sustains a consistent onsite general anaesthetic service provided by teams from The Christie and Royal Manchester Children's Hospital with 1-2 lists running every day
- Increased access to a range of clinical trials suitable for children
- Improved scanning increasingly necessary for accurate radiotherapy planning with access to contrast enhanced MRIs and CTs
- Emergency access to a specialised paediatric arrest team

Limiting the potential impact for patients and their families

- The primary finding from the EHIA is that this will result in compliance with the service specification and ensuring the highest available standard of care, travel time for most patients will increase
- Eligible children and their families will still be able to seek financial support for help with travel costs
- When the service transfers this will be in a staggered approach – children already commenced on a pathway of care at CCC will complete their care there. New referrals will be sent directly to the Christie
- Clinicians are keen that children are not disadvantaged by increased travel times and that there is equality of approach between patients receiving photons and protons (who have travel and accommodation provided depending on the travel distances). Discussions are ongoing but this should not delay the service transfer
- While the numbers of children with these rare cancers referred for these services each year is low, discussions about treatment options are managed on an individual basis with a holistic team supporting families every step of the way to address any concerns or barriers
- As work progresses to transition conventional X-ray radiotherapy paediatric patients from Clatterbridge to The Christie, additional steps will be taken to monitor detailed feedback about the quality of the patient experience



"I would travel to Mars to get the best treatment for my child"
Mother of child with craniopharyngioma, December 2022

