North Central London Integrated Care Board is responsible for the provision of healthcare services across North London. They are currently undertaking a consultation to review maternity and neonatal services in the area, and as part of their proposed reforms, they are considering closing the maternity and neonatal unit at the Royal Free Hospital. I am fighting against this proposal, and I want to encourage you to get involved to help save these vital services!

**How to help and get involved:**

1. MAKE A SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION: The consultation about this proposal is currently underway and it remains open until **11.59pm on 17 March 2024**.
	* + Anyone is welcome to make a submission to the consultation to raise their concerns about the proposals and I would encourage you to do so by filling out the form at this link: <https://online.ors.org.uk/questionnaire/20250AD?clear_session=true&language=en>
		+ You don’t have to respond to every question on the form, all questions are optional.
2. SIGN MY PETITION: I have started a petition to save the Royal Free’s maternity and neonatal unit and every signature helps. You can sign the petition online by following this link: <https://www.tulipsiddiq.com/2024/01/26/save-the-royal-free-hospitals-maternity-unit/>

**Here are some useful points you may want to include in your submission:**

* I agree that it is important to review the healthcare services provided in North Central London to ensure that the best possible care is given to patients, but this does not need to spell the closure of the Royal Free’s excellent maternity and neonatal unit. What’s needed is an expansion and upgrade of existing services.
* I strongly disagree with the proposal to decrease the number of hospitals providing maternity and neonatal care. Closing the Royal Free’s unit will mean lots of people are left with a long and difficult journey to access their next nearest maternity services.
* The Royal Free provides a number of specialist services that are not available at any other hospital in North Central London (including the Whittington), including dialysis services, interventional radiology services, and on-site cardiac intensive care. In 2023, there were 25 pregnant women in North Central London who could only have received the care they needed at the Royal Free.
* The Royal Free’s maternity and neonatal unit has the capacity to be expanded and it also regularly absorbs overflow from other hospitals nearby like Barnet Hospital and UCLH, and if the unit were to close, it is not clear where those women would go.
* The Integrated Care Board argues that the Royal Free’s neonatal unit does not see enough babies for it to be kept open. However, this is in part because the Royal Free unit is currently not designated to accommodate women with a gestational age before 34 weeks. More and more women are having more complex pregnancies The answer to this issue is to upgrade the current unit so that it can accommodate more patients, not to simply close the unit altogether.
* The closure of the Royal Free unit will widen inequality and its impact will be most significant for the most marginalised patients – those from low-income backgrounds, BME and ethnic minority patients, those with complex health issues. There is also a fear among doctors at the Royal Free that the closure could also lead to an increased maternal mortality rate.