

# Government moves cleft lip and palate surgery to Glasgow

✘ The Scottish Government has today announced the closure of the East of Scotland cleft lip and palate surgery unit.

Campaigners have been very vocal in recent months to ensure that the facility would remain open, but the government has decided it would be best to centralise all services in Glasgow.

Dr Catherine Calderwood, Chief Medical Officer and Professor Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director have supported the decision, as well as the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

There are approximately 100 new cleft cases each year in the consolidation of surgery services will ensure the even distribution of cases across the expert team.

Health Secretary, Shona Robison, said: “I have accepted this recommendation from the expert group who have advised that consolidating these procedures will deliver a more sustainable service and improve equity in outcomes for patients, which is our main aim when making any decision. We have been careful to ensure that there are a number of conditions in place to aid a smooth transition for both staff and patients.

“This decision relates to cleft surgery only. The wider teams involved in cleft care including, speech and language therapy, orthodontists, ENT surgeons and paediatric dentistry, as well as local outreach clinics, will continue to be delivered locally as they are now, across Scotland.

“We will have cleft surgeons working alongside one another and sharing best practice and knowledge, with an even distribution of surgical procedures, which means patients will get the

treatment they need when they need it.

“In any scenario like this it’s important to spend time listening to patients, families, stakeholders and experts, which is what I have done, so we can come to a fully informed decision that is in the best interests of cleft patients.”

Both Miles Briggs Lothians MSP and Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP have supported the campaign which involved a petition being handed into Holyrood calling for the service to be saved.

Miles Briggs said: “This is one of the worst decisions regarding our health service this SNP Government has taken, and a bitter blow to thousands of patients and their families up and down Eastern Scotland.

“Ministers have completely failed to listen to the views of clinicians, patients and campaigners and have made the wrong decision.

“The Edinburgh surgical unit is led by an internationally renowned surgeon and the audited outcomes it achieves for babies and children are among the best, if not the best, in the whole of the UK. The Health Secretary’s decision now risks the loss of all of this.

“Instead of closing the Edinburgh service, the Health Secretary should have listened and delivered a single service, two-site model with surgery being offered in both Edinburgh and Glasgow.”

Mr Cole-Hamilton said: “The decision by the Cabinet Secretary for Health to centralise cleft surgery services to Glasgow will come as a bitter blow to campaigners who have tirelessly worked to make the case for a continuing service in Edinburgh.

“Dr Mehendale has led a world class unit providing care and surgery to children affected by cleft palate issues and I know will share the disappointment of campaigners in this

outcome.

“Just because something looks to make sense financially doesn't mean that it outweighs the very real impact on patients on the east coast who will now be deprived of a local and world leading centre of excellence in this field.”