

Sick Kids will not admit children for another year

The Health Secretary Jeane Freeman made a scheduled statement to Holyrood earlier this afternoon about the new Sick Kids at Little France which had been due to open in July. The Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP) remains closed while inquiries are ongoing.

The Minister said that she expects the Department of Clinical Neurosciences (DCN) to move in spring next year with the rest of the Children's Hospital migrating to the new site in autumn 2020.

The decision announced today follows two reports commissioned by the Health Secretary in July aimed at ensuring patient safety.

An independent review of the governance arrangements for RHCYP by consultants KPMG found that the main issue with ventilation in critical care stemmed from an error in a document produced by NHS Lothian at the tender stage in 2012. This was despite the requirement to also adhere to relevant technical guidance.

The [KPMG report](#) attributes this to human error and confusion over interpretation of standards and guidance. It also concludes that opportunities to spot and rectify that error were missed.

"We have seen evidence of professional and technical advisors being involved throughout the Project. This included specific involvement in

relation to ventilation issues. However, we have seen no evidence that professional or technical advice identified the Issue prior to June 2019."

From the KPMG report.

Ms Freeman said: "I would like to acknowledge the contribution of staff who have continued to provide high quality clinical services. We are all very grateful for their dedication and professionalism in what have been very difficult and disappointing circumstances.

"I also want to thank the patients and families affected for their patience. The safest possible care of their children is my overriding priority and I am sorry for any impact the current situation has had on them.

"I am of course bitterly disappointed that a mistake made in 2012 was not picked up earlier. This is a publicly funded project of strategic importance, which has not been delivered by NHS Lothian in compliance with the standards and guidance. The delay we now face will be borne by NHS Lothian staff, by patients and their families and the additional cost will be to the public purse.

"My overriding priority is that the children and families who depend on these hospital services can receive them in the safest way possible. The current situation is not one anyone would chose – but it is one I am determined to resolve."

The Minister has also asked NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) to undertake a [detailed assessment](#) of compliance of all the building systems which might have an impact on patients as well as staff at the new hospital. This threw up a range of issues which have to be resolved before anyone can move in including ventilation and water systems. The Scottish Government also published an [action plan](#) from the board along

with both reports, and are putting a Senior Programme Director in charge of day to day progress until delivery.

“Overall remedial action is required to be undertaken within the ventilation and water systems prior to occupation.”

NSS report

In the Programme for Government the Scottish Government announced that a new oversight body would be created to examine all stages of major NHS Scotland infrastructure developments.

Tim Davison, Chief Executive of NHS Lothian, said: “I know this is a difficult time for staff and patients and I apologise for the extended delay. I would like to thank our teams for all of their hard work and dedication throughout.

“We accept the findings of the KPMG report in full. We have also produced a detailed action plan in response to the NHS National Services Scotland report and work is already well underway to implement it.

“We will continue to work constructively with Scottish Government to progress towards opening as soon as possible.”

Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said: “This confirms that patients and their families will have had to wait nearly a decade longer than promised for this much-needed hospital.

“On top of that, the taxpayer will have to fork out more than £30 million between now and next autumn to compensate for these catastrophic failings.

“Staff and families alike will also be sceptical about whether this hospital will be open by next autumn.

“They’ve been promised – year after year – that new timescales will be adhered to, and they’ve been repeatedly let down.

“All over the world new hospitals are built and delivered on time and on budget.

“Yet under the SNP, from the very outset, this project has been a farce.

“As a result, thousands of young and vulnerable patients from across Scotland will suffer.

“In a cynical move SNP ministers think a 30-minute statement and sneaking out two major reports on the hospital is acceptable when it comes to answering questions.

“It is not and they should hang their heads in shame if they think this is how they prevent parliament holding them to account.

“The scandal surrounding the construction of the new Sick Kids hospital has come to symbolise this SNP government’s incompetence and mismanagement of our NHS.”

Scottish Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Health, Monica Lennon MSP, said: “The delays to the opening of the new children’s hospital have been a disaster, but we are still no clearer on where the responsibility lies.

“This fiasco has already cost the taxpayer millions, and caused unneeded stress for the children, their families and NHS staff.

“It’s time for the Health Secretary to open the fiasco up to scrutiny and agree to a full blown independent public inquiry

to get to the bottom of this mess.”

Alison Johnstone MSP the Scottish Green parliamentary co-leader said: “This is a huge delay, and the people who will be most disappointed will be the staff and patients who are currently crammed into the old site at Sciennes. It is right the minister apologised to them.

“Of course, it is absolutely correct that patient safety must come first, but while this supposedly state-of-the-art facility is brought up to standards it should have met in the first place, staff and patients are stuck in an environment which they had already begun to move out of. We are now told it will be next Autumn before they can transfer over.

“The cost of the new hospital is eye-watering, but that doesn’t mean financial support isn’t needed to make sure those who remain at the old site aren’t comfortable and safe too.

“That means investment in good staffing levels, equipment and the kind of support children and their families need to put the patient at the centre of care.

“Someone signed off this new hospital when it was clearly not safe or in a fit state for use by our children. That raises the question for who is responsible and liable for this mess.

“Those who have supported private finance used to argue that the risk would be transferred to the private sector. This case reveals that argument to be totally bogus, just as the Scottish Greens have maintained for 20 years. With the SNP’s NPD model, just like PFI before it, it is the public that picks up the cost when things go wrong – this time at £1.35m a month.

“It’s time for the SNP to ditch the private finance schemes that saddle our public services with debt.”

Thomas Waterson, chair of UNISON Health Committee said: “We need a public enquiry into this whole fiasco to find out who knew what and when. Even after the most recent KPMG report we still don’t know if, for example, the drainage system is fit for purpose.”

“It was very frustrating for NHS Lothian health workers to have their move to the new hospital cancelled days before it was due to happen. Significant time and organisation goes into such a move. Now to be told that we need to wait until Autumn 2020 to move is simply unacceptable.

There is also considerable extra cost to bring this hospital building up to standard, the latest figure is £23m. We understand this will be paid from public funds. This is money that should have been spent on patient care. Why are patients, staff and tax payers being penalised for these errors?”

This fiasco shows the weakness of the Scottish Governments’ private finance system: The Scottish Futures Trust. It cannot be allowed to happen again. We need a public enquiry to learn the lessons.”

This morning before the statement was made, the Liberal Democrat health spokesman Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP urged the Health Secretary to come clean with parliament. He said “The Health Secretary needs to use today’s statement to tell Parliament exactly what has gone wrong at the new Sick Kids and to come clean about when it’s going to be fixed.

“Patients and staff are understandably frustrated about the lack of information on why this brand new hospital is deserted.

“Monthly costs for the unopened hospital continue to pile up at an astonishing rate and now we know a further £62,000 was spent on advertising for a hospital move that never took

place. To make matters worse, we found at least one advert still pointing parents to the wrong place more than a month later.

“The SNP Government should take this opportunity to set the record straight on this fiasco and give Edinburgh residents a clear timetable of action. At the moment we’re pouring more and more money down the drain without an end in sight.”



To mark the end of an era for the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, staff gathered outside the main entrance of the Royal Hospital for Children in July 2019 for a final farewell photo. The hospital remains open.