

Comment – Miles Briggs speaks out about the SNP and the NHS

by Miles Briggs Conservative MSP for Lothian and Conservative spokesman on Health.

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

From the off, the saga that is the construction of the new Sick Kids hospital, has been badly managed by SNP Ministers with the hospital originally scheduled to be opened in Winter 2012. Since then, more than 300,000 children in A&E alone have been denied access to the new hospital they and their parents were promised.

A total of 312,441 local youngsters have received accident and emergency care at the outdated facility in Sciennes in this time. That's in addition to the estimated 34,000 outpatient appointments which take place at the hospital each year. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the NHS staff who have supported families and who continue to provide the care and love and support to the children and families throughout this process. I know they feel incredibly let down and disappointed by the mismanagement of the new Sick Kids.

The Health Minister has emphasised the point that the new hospital will not open until fully satisfied of patient safety, something that I completely agree with, patient safety must always come first. However, this does not hide the sheer ineptitude of consecutive Health Ministers in the oversight of NHS Lothian in constructing the new hospital. From the statement made in Parliament on Wednesday it now looks like SNP Ministers are attempting to use NHS Lothian management as a shield for the "catastrophic failings" in the construction

of the new hospital, in a desperate attempt to dodge any personal responsibility for the fiasco.

It is also important to remember that is not just the new Sick Kids hospital that is being impacted on, but also the adjacent Department of Clinical Neurosciences, which may not open until the spring. All this begs the question over what impact this will have on finances of NHS Lothian. As things stand today the Board are predicting a £29.5 million shortfall this financial year, so are clearly not in a financial position to pay for these significant addition costs. SNP Ministers will have to use funding that was earmarked for other projects to pay for these failures. What impact will this now have on the funding and delivery of health services for patients across NHS Scotland ?

As I write this it is clear that there is still a long way still to go before we can have confidence in the opening of the Sick Kids what and when SNP Ministers knew and why we have seen such incredible mismanagement and incompetence must be answered . I know NHS staff and families alike who have been promised – year after year – that new timescales will be adhered to, will be incredibly sceptical about this latest promise having been repeatedly let down.

Children and families across Lothian and the East of Scotland deserve a new Sick Kids hospital we can all be proud off. I look forward to the day, I hope soon, when that can be realised and we can begin to rebuild trust.

