

Unanswered questions about delays to Sick Kids

Sick Kids questions remain unanswered

The public spending watchdog said important questions about the delay to the opening of the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People remain unanswered.

The Auditor General for Scotland said the reviews to date have been unable to establish a number of issues, including:

- why specifications in the hospital's 2012 tender papers were inconsistent with national ventilation guidelines for critical care areas – an error that led to confusion
- and why a series of opportunities to spot the error – which caused the delay to the 2019 opening of the hospital – were missed.

The report sets out the facts as they are known and draws on the reviews already carried out by KPMG and NHS National Services Scotland, as well as NHS Lothian's annual audit report. It comes ahead of a public inquiry into the hospital project and raises broader issues for consideration, including:

- the clarity and application of the national ventilation guidelines, and how they were managed
- the effectiveness of the oversight and scrutiny of the project
- the role of all the parties involved, including project company IHSL's construction arm, Brookfield Multiplex, who also built the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow.

Caroline Gardner, Auditor General for Scotland said: “It’s clear that the checks and balances around the construction of the new children’s hospital didn’t work, and the public inquiry may want to consider why that happened after similar issues had emerged around the building of schools in Edinburgh.

“It would also be beneficial to understand the role played by all the parties involved, and to explore why the issues that emerged at Glasgow’s Queen Elizabeth hospital didn’t prompt greater scrutiny in Edinburgh.”

The KPMG independent review into the decision to delay the move to the Children’s Hospital concluded that the issue was due to human error and confusion over the interpretation of standards and guidelines. And that opportunities to spot and rectify the error were missed on numerous occasions.

Health Secretary Jeane Freeman said:

“I’d like to thank Audit Scotland for this report, which recognises the crucial role of the independent public inquiry into issues at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP) in Edinburgh and the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (QEUH) campus in Glasgow.

“The KPMG and NSS reports into the RHCYP will provide a significant amount of the underpinning evidence for the inquiry, alongside the ongoing independent review into the delivery and maintenance of the QEUH.

“As I announced last month, the Rt Hon. Lord Brodie will chair this independent public inquiry, which will help us learn lessons from recent issues so they are not repeated in the future. I have a statutory obligation to consult with the chair on the inquiry’s terms of reference and I will provide a further update to Parliament early in the new year.

“In the meantime, NHS Lothian continue to provide high quality

care from the existing sites, and I want to thank staff, patients and their families for their continued patience as we work to migrate services to the new site as soon as it is safe to do so. Patient safety will always be my top priority.”