

Round the clock paediatric inpatient services in St John's Hospital to resume in Autumn

Round the clock paediatric inpatient services in St John's Hospital will resume this Autumn, it was agreed today.

NHS Lothian will reinstate the service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from October, to enhance the care already provided to children in West Lothian.

The details were agreed by NHS Lothian board members at their meeting this morning.

It means that inpatient paediatrics will be extended from functioning four nights a week, to seven days and nights by October 19.

Dr Tracey Gillies, Medical Director, NHS Lothian, said the children's ward was now in a position to fully re-open after a number of new staff were recruited to the team.

She said: "We are really pleased that we are able to fully reinstate children's inpatient services 24/7 in St John's Hospital. It is testament to the teams who have pulled together to make this happen.

"We have always said that we could only restore the full service when it was safe and sustainable to do so and that has

been our priority throughout.

“Parents and children will not have to do anything differently and many may not even notice a difference. However it does mean that patients who require to remain in hospital over a weekend will be able to do so at St John’s, instead of routinely being transferred to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh.”

Two permanent Consultants and one locum have been recruited to the team at St John’s, following successful rounds of recruitment in June. A small number of ward nurse vacancies are in the process of being filled, meaning that staffing in the unit will be further strengthened.

The availability of Advanced Paediatric Nurse Practitioners has also increased, giving added resilience to the staffing rota.

The Paediatric Programme Board (PPB), which was established to help develop and implement a strategy to deliver safe and sustainable services, was told at its most recent meeting that the unit had sufficient cover to provide a safe and sustainable rota for out of hours and weekend shifts.

It was also agreed that the programme board will now be dissolved because it has fulfilled its remit.

This announcement comes just weeks after the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health published its most recent review into the service and praised NHS Lothian for its “considerable and impressive efforts” to restore the 24/7 service.

NHS Lothian invited the RCPCH to return and undertake a second follow up review of progress since their original Review and Report in 2016. The visit took place in February 2020 and the College’s Report was received at the end of May 2020.

Parents and families are not required to do anything

differently as a result of the change and will still access care in the normal way, through NHS 24, their GP or the Emergency Department.

If children are very sick or require specialist intervention, they will continue to be admitted to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, in line with the normal protocols.

Health Secretary Jeane Freeman said: "I warmly welcome the decision of NHS Lothian to re-instate the paediatric inpatient service at St John's Hospital on a 24/7 basis from the 19th of October and am delighted they have honoured the commitment we made together.

"Having met local families who were campaigning to have the full service re-instated, I know they will also be delighted.

"I am grateful to NHS Lothian for their considerable recruitment efforts to ensure the service can be safely resumed on a 24/7 basis. Patient safety must always be the paramount concern and it was important a safe and sustainable staffing model was established before the commitment to a round-the-clock inpatient service was made.

"I have been assured by NHS Lothian that the service will continue to be closely monitored to ensure it remains robust."