

Changes to the Children's Ward at St John's Hospital

To ensure patient safety, NHS Lothian is making changes to the children's inpatient services at St John's Hospital, Livingston.

Patients will not be admitted to the children's inpatient ward at St John's Hospital, from Friday 7 July 2017. The children's ward will continue to operate as an assessment and programmed investigation unit from Monday to Friday between the hours of 8am and 8pm.

We are committed to reinstating the full service as soon as possible after the summer.

Questions and Answers

Q. What should I do if my child is ill or injured and needs hospital treatment?

A. If your child is ill or has an accident, please contact your GP or NHS 24 on 111. Your GP or NHS 24 will make sure you are directed to the most appropriate service. If it is an emergency, call 999.

Q. As a parent, do I need to do anything differently?

A. No. While there will be changes to the service, we are not asking parents to do anything differently. If you think your child needs to go to hospital, please contact your GP or NHS 24. If it is an emergency, call 999.

The maternity and neonatal service at St John's Hospital is unaffected.

Q. My child has surgery planned at St John's Hospital. What will happen?

A. You should attend as planned.

Q. What services will be delivered in the Mon- Fri 8am to 8pm service?

A. Outpatient clinics, investigations, assessments, day case surgery and other day case treatment will be provided as normal. The only change is that if your child requires to be admitted to hospital, they will be transferred to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh.

Q. What arrangements are being made to transfer patients to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children (RHSC) in Edinburgh?

A. Urgent transfers will be made by the Scottish Ambulance Service, as happens at the moment. The team at St John's Hospital will support families if a transfer is necessary and will arrange transport as required.

Q. Can I claim travel expenses if I am visiting my child at the RHSC?

A. Our Family Support service based at the RHSC is there to help families with issues like this during their child's stay in hospital. Out of Hours, the Clinical Co-ordinator is the point of contact. If you require their support, please ask a member of staff at the RHSC.

Q. Why are you doing this?

A. The decision to change the opening hours has been made as a result of ongoing staffing and recruitment issues which mean there are not enough doctors available to cover overnight and weekends.

Over the past five years NHS Lothian has invested heavily in efforts to ensure safe staffing levels could be maintained on the ward. Despite national and international recruitment campaigns and a comprehensive independent review by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), it has not been possible to fill the key medical and specialist nursing posts required to provide a safe, reliable and sustainable workforce model.

Q. Will maternity and neonatal services at St John's Hospital be affected by these measures?

A. No. Taking this decision ensures there will be sufficient paediatric doctors on shift to cover the maternity and neonatal services. Around 2,800 babies are born at St John's Hospital each year.

Q. What has been done to let people know?

A. We want to reassure parents that we are not asking them to do anything differently during this period. We are working with the Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS 24 and local GPs to ensure they can direct patients to the most appropriate service during this time.

Information has been made available on the NHS Lothian website and in GP surgeries, libraries and community centres.

Q. When will the children's ward re-open fully?

A. We are working to reinstate the full service as soon as possible. We are working with the Chief Medical Officer, Scottish Government and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to review the steps we have taken and to identify what else can be done to guarantee safe, sustainable staffing for this service.