

NHS spending on locums breaks the £300m mark

8 Mar 2018



Spending on temporary staff to plug gaps in Scotland's NHS broke the £300 million mark for the first time last year, new research has shown.

Health boards were forced to spend more than £310 million in 2016/17 on locum doctors and nurses, an increase from £250 million the previous year.

And compared to 2014/15, the increase is more than £100 million.

The figures – obtained by the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information – come as Scotland is in the grip of a GP crisis.

Earlier this week, a GP survey found that one in four practices has a doctor vacancy, while the overall number of GPs has reduced in recent years.

This issue was raised by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson at First Minister's Questions today, who also pointed out that in eight of the last 10 years, the share of GP funding has fallen north of the border.

She demanded Nicola Sturgeon explain why, after more than a decade in sole charge of the health brief, her SNP government has failed to act.

However, instead of addressing the problems in locum spending and general practice, the First Minister pointed to the performance of health systems in other parts of the UK.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The number of GPs has plummeted in the face of increasing patient demand, and one in four surgeries is now short of a doctor.

“This is happening while the NHS at large in Scotland is being propped up by expensive private agencies to fill the gaps, because of poor workforce planning.

“This has occurred on the SNP's watch – it is a mess of the nationalist government's making.

“It's the same old story from the First Minister – she wants people to ignore a record amassed over a decade, and instead blindly believe her promises for the future.

“But right across Scotland people are struggling to get an appointment with their GP, and family doctors are feeling the strain.

“The SNP government needs to explain why it’s allowed this to happen.”

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5 Mar 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are calling for employers to observe best practice and not to penalise employees who were unable to get to work during the recent snow storms.

Due to amber and red weather warnings, public transport was suspended and people were told not to travel unless it was an emergency.

Reports have now emerged that some employees may have been threatened with a loss of wages, having not made it to work during this time.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“No employee should be financially penalised for not being able to get to work through some of the worst weather Scotland has seen for years.

“Indeed, even if it was possible to get to work, the red weather warning specifically stated that only emergency travel was permitted in order to protect everyone’s safety.

“The Scottish Conservatives are therefore calling on all employers to observe best practice and pay all their staff over the snow days.

“The many acts of kindness and heroism that we have all seen over the last few days should not be marred by the meanness of a few.”

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4 Mar 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are to launch a new initiative to elect more women and BME candidates to Holyrood.

Ahead of International Women's Day this week, the party will launch a commission headed by Baroness Nosheena Mobarik to ensure the greater gender and ethnic diversity in the party's ranks at the next Holyrood election.

It will be build on successful campaigns such as Women2Win Scotland – launched last year by party leader Ruth Davidson.

Speaking today, Ruth said that the party needs to demonstrate greater diversity in order to become “a government for Scotland.”

She said that the revelations in recent weeks about sexual harassment and racism had been “catastrophic for politics and public life in general” – and that all political parties now needed to show they were prepared to act.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson MSP said:

“We want to restore trust in our public realm – to show that Scottish politics can meet anger with answers.

“To be a Scottish government that truly represents people in every town, city and village in the country.

“That looks and sounds like the people we serve.

“And we need to act.

“Let's confront this head on.

“The last few months have been catastrophic for politics and public life in general.

“The appalling treatment of women in public life has been exposed for all to see.

“And here in Scotland, I applaud Anas Sarwar for bravely exposing how we are still afflicted by casual racism.

“Political parties must uphold the highest standards.

“But the truth is that no party can stand up right now and say, hand on heart, they are not tainted.

“Every party needs to act. And that includes us.

“And by the time of the next Holyrood election, the Scottish Conservatives need to show we’ve got it.

“That we understand the need to change.

“So I can announce today that, under Nosheena Mobarik, we are setting up a new Commission with a specific remit.

“We will ensure that our BME community is represented in person on our benches in the next Parliament.

“And, complementing the work of Women2Win Scotland, we will ensure that more women are selected in winnable seats and regions too.

“Let the message be clear: Scottish Conservatives value, need and want the contribution of everyone in Scotland.

“Let’s show we understand – that if we don’t sort this out, we won’t become a government for Scotland.

“We won’t be the truly national party we aspire to become.

“And that we won’t deserve to either.”

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1 Mar 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has spent a decade chasing headlines rather than export markets, Ruth Davidson said today – as figures show how the SNP is missing its own targets to sell Scotland’s products abroad.

It comes after the SNP Government this week unveiled the latest version of

its National Investment Bank, nine years after first proposing the idea in 2009.

Analysis by the Scottish Conservatives shows how:

- The SNP first proposed an investment bank were in 2009;
- Changed the plan to set up a Business Development bank in 2013;
- Dumped the plan in 2016;
- Then announced a new half-billion pound Scottish Growth Fund – which has so far delivered barely a penny;
- Before finally unveiling a new Scottish National Investment Bank in 2017.

At First Minister's Questions, Ruth Davidson said that as a consequence of a "decade of dither and delay" under the SNP, the Scottish Government was due to fall £27 billion short of its target to increase exports by 50%.

The Scottish Conservatives also published a Freedom of Information request which asked for details of the National Investment Bank.

Highlighting the confusion over the SNP's plans for the economy, the First Minister's office asked in response: "Grateful for confirmation as to whether your enquiry refers to the Scottish National Investment Bank or the Scottish Investment Bank."

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson MSP said:

"The challenge of securing economic growth for Scotland is the most important issue facing the Scottish Government. Instead we have had a decade of dither and delay.

"Nicola Sturgeon's plan for a Scottish National Investment Bank was first proposed in 2009. Now, nearly ten years on, not even the First Minister's office seems to know exactly what plans are in place.

"The SNP told us in 2010 that they would increase exports by 50%. Their own figures show they are running short by the small matter of £27 billion.

"That's the price of an SNP that's keen to get the headlines for launches and relaunches but forgets to build the actual bank until 9 years later.

"This SNP Government isn't working for Scotland. We need a Scottish Conservative government to deliver for Scotland and secure the economic growth we need."

SNP must deliver flexible childcare

28 Feb 2018



The Scottish Conservatives will use their debating time today to call for considerable improvements in the current and future provision of childcare and to call for progress on the childcare account.

The Scottish Conservatives will highlight that some of the most important ways of improving the delivery of high quality childcare are related to improving accessibility and flexibility for parents.

In addition, since the announcement by former minister Mark McDonald last year, the SNP has made no progress on the childcare account, which the Scottish Conservatives have advocated for several years.

The debate follows the recent critical report by the Accounts Commission which stated that there were “significant risks” that local authorities would not be in a position to deliver the Scottish Government’s target of 1,140 hours by 2020.

The motion also calls for the SNP to engage constructively with all groups and local authorities to agree a comprehensive strategy that will deliver quality childcare provision across Scotland.

Scottish Conservative childcare and early years spokesman, Michelle Ballantyne commented:

“The Scottish Conservatives believe that the delivery of high quality childcare will not happen unless there are considerable improvements in its accessibility and flexibility for parents.

“Increasing the number of hours on a targeted basis is important but it can only bring limited benefit if these additional hours cannot be used effectively.

“The recent Audit Scotland/Accounts Commission report slated the SNP for underestimating the costs of the intended 1140 hours provision. It also criticised the SNP for failing to undertake any analysis to determine what makes qualitative improvements in the provision of childcare and how it will be made easier for parents to access.

“This is a completely unsatisfactory situation which is creating a great deal of anger amongst parents and hampering the incentive of providers to make childcare more flexible.

“The Scottish Conservatives have long argued for a flexible childcare voucher system.

“Last year, the Scottish Government said it was looking to introduce exactly this to be known as a childcare account but nothing has happened. It is time to change all that and give parents what they want.”