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- Another new low for A&E waiting times performance

9 Jan 2018



Waiting times performance in Scotland's casualty departments sank to a new low between Christmas and New Year, latest figures have revealed.

The 21.6 per cent forced to wait beyond the target four hours is significantly worse than the previous poorest performance of 18.9 per cent a few weeks ago.

And in NHS Forth Valley in the final week of the year, just 57.3 per cent of accident and emergency patients were seen to on time.

The figures also revealed, in that single week, 272 people had to wait longer than 12 hours in A&E.

That compares to just two patients for the same period last year.

NHS Lothian was singled out for criticism after discrepancies were found with data previously published by the health board.

As a result, ISD Scotland published a separate set of national figures which didn't include the data of Scotland's second largest health board.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"It's widely accepted that winter is the toughest time for the NHS in terms of getting people seen to on time.

"But these figures are nothing short of a disgrace.

"Just when you think the SNP's performance on this cannot get any worse, new statistics come out showing further regressions.

"The situation is so bad now that, in some health boards, barely half of A&E patients were seen on time.

"It would also appear NHS Lothian has some serious questions to answer.

"Years after the health board's waiting times scandal, ISD Scotland doesn't seem to have full confidence in the organisation when it comes to providing accurate and trustworthy records.

“If Scotland’s official statistician can’t trust NHS Lothian, what are patients supposed to think?”

[Curriculum for Excellence needs to be ‘reset’](#)

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9 Jan 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are today calling for a ‘reset’ of the SNP’s Curriculum for Excellence programme.

In a paper published today, the party makes five key recommendations to improve the delivery of CfE – following growing criticism of the SNP’s education plans.

A poll of teachers by Ipsos Mori at the start of the year found that schools are facing a rise in disruption because pupils are switching off from the new curriculum, and see the National 4 qualification as not worth their while.

Another survey found that staff at Education Scotland – the government agency charged with improving the roll out of CfE – do not believe the organisation has been capable of delivering reforms successfully.

Today, the Scottish Conservatives are calling on the SNP to get a grip of Scotland’s education system before another generation of Scottish schoolchildren is let down.

The paper follows extensive consultation with teachers, education experts and parents across Scotland.

In her conclusion, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith MSP declares:

“Throughout all the interviews and consultations we undertook, there was general agreement that the principles which underpin Curriculum for Excellence – and which were agreed unanimously by Scotland’s political parties – are sound.

“This is because there is widespread agreement that pupils should understand why they are learning something just as much as what they are learning.”

She adds: “There was also general agreement however, that the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence has been fraught with problems which, in turn, have undermined its effective delivery in the classroom. There is no time to lose to get Curriculum for Excellence back on track and ensure that Scotland is, once again, leading the field in education.”

The party is proposing five recommendations to improve the delivery of the curriculum.

- Improve clarity, accountability and measurement – so parents, teachers and young people know exactly what CfE is expected to deliver.
- Address the teacher shortage crisis by opening up new routes into the classroom and reform teacher training to boost standards.
- Slash the excessive guidance and paperwork issued to teachers to ensure that CfE has the appropriate balance between learning core knowledge and new skills.
- Reform Scotland’s Education Agencies – Education Scotland should not be responsible for curriculum development, and for inspecting it.
- Extend school autonomy so head-teachers are free to make decisions to help drive up standards in their own school community.

Ms Smith adds today: “Simply put, Curriculum for Excellence needs to be re-set. Under the SNP, its implementation has been muddled at best and chaotic at worst.

“There is no point having a new curriculum if pupils are not getting the basics in literacy and numeracy and teachers are left confused by what they’re supposed to be doing. As the evidence shows, this will only lead to disruption in the classroom as pupils switch off.

“The SNP must get a grip. Nicola Sturgeon said education was her top priority after she became First Minister – only to spend most of her time obsessing over independence. In 2018, it is time she honoured her promise.”

You can read a copy of the paper, ‘A new blueprint for the Curriculum for Excellence’, here:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Blueprint-for-Curriculum-for-Excellence.pdf>

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- Sturgeon must explain low vaccination rates for Scottish NHS staff

8 Jan 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has been challenged to explain why vaccination rates for NHS staff in Scotland are falling below those elsewhere in the UK.

Speaking on Good Morning Scotland today, the First Minister sought to claim that vaccination rates for doctors, nurses and medical staff were higher than last year.

However, she did not explain why rates are so much lower than elsewhere in the UK, and below the set target.

The latest available figures for 2016-17 show that only 35 per cent of healthcare workers were vaccinated against flu. The target is 50 per cent – a level that has never been reached.

However, the comparable figure was 63 per cent for England and 49 per cent for Wales.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“Nicola Sturgeon tried to put a gloss on the SNP’s response to the winter flu crisis this morning but failed to explain why so few NHS staff in Scotland have been inoculated.

“Last year, only 35 per cent of healthcare workers were vaccinated against flu – below the target, and well below figures elsewhere in the UK.

“The impact of this is devastating – it means doctors and nurses unable to come into work, and patients suffering further delays as a result.

“The SNP was warned repeatedly about the impending flu crisis coming to Scotland and repeatedly failed to act on those warnings. It’s all very well the First Minister saying sorry now, but she needs to demonstrate that the SNP is getting a grip.”

[Attacks on emergency service workers hit 3-year high](#)

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8 Jan 2018



The number of assaults on emergency service workers has reached a three-year high, new figures have revealed.

In 2016/17, a total of 6509 common assaults were recorded on police, fire and ambulance staff, the equivalent of nearly 18 a day in Scotland.

And the Scottish Government admitted the true figure may be even greater, with official statistics not recording some of the more serious incidents.

The number of attacks last year was nearly 100 more than in 2015/16, the highest since 2013/14.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said the SNP had to take the issue of emergency service worker safety more seriously.

Other statistics from 2015/16 have shown that while 260 were convicted under the dedicated Emergency Workers Act legislation, just 58 received a custodial sentence as a result.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“The protection of our dedicated emergency service workers has to be absolutely paramount.

“There are laws in place to crack down on this very thing, and it’s time we started using them.

“It’s extremely worrying that the number of attacks recorded by police on emergency service workers has risen to a three-year high.

“We have to get tough on those who commit these offences to make it absolutely clear it will not be tolerated.

“Many of these attacks will have occurred when a police officer, paramedic or firefighter has arrived specifically to help the very people who end up assaulting them.

“That’s illogical and unacceptable, and the fact these figures may just be a fraction of the whole picture is all the more concerning.

“This is a subject I’ve pressed ministers on repeatedly, but I am yet to see any convincing action from them on this front.”

SNP Ministers failed to act on flu warnings

7 Jan 2018



SNP Ministers failed to act on clear warnings that Scotland faced an imminent flu crisis this winter, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Calls to boost jab rates ahead of this winter were made last September after figures revealed a drop in the number of inoculations to all groups for whom the flu jab is recommended.

At the time, the Scottish Conservatives urged action to ensure more people received the crucial flu jab this winter.

However, provisional figures for this year suggest that uptake in key groups is no higher than last year.

The fears about low jab rates was reinforced in December when further figures revealed that only one in three healthcare workers received flu jabs last winter – well below the target of 50%.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs today said the SNP had failed to heed warnings about an imminent flu crisis hitting the NHS.

He said Ministers now needed to set out action to ensure more people were getting the right jab for the rest of the winter.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“The SNP was warned about the dangers of a flu crisis this winter. All the signs were there. They knew vaccination rates were dropping.

“Yet despite our repeated calls for action, they failed to act in time to protect more people, and support our NHS.

“Instead all we get are excuses and belated attempts to act.

“This whole sorry episode is yet more evidence of SNP mismanagement of our NHS. Shona Robison should apologise immediately for her mishandling of this crisis.

“They knew they had a problem – and, once again, were found asleep at the wheel. It is a disgrace.”

1. Warnings about this winter’s uptake of the flu jab were raised by the

Scottish Conservatives on September 29th last year:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/09/warnings-over-flu-epidemic-after-jab-uptake-falls/>

2. Up to date provisional figures for 2017-18 flu jab rates are published here, on page 4:

www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resourcedocument.aspx?id=6321

They show vaccination rates of:

- 71.0% in people aged 65 years and over, (compared with 71.0% in 2016-17)
- 41.3% in under 65's at-risk, (compared with 42.2% in 2016-17)
- 52.6% in preschool children (2 to under 5 year olds), compared with 54.8% in 2016-17
- 71.0% in primary school children, compared with 71.0% in 2016-17