

# Police spent tens of thousands keeping details secret

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- Police spent tens of thousands keeping details secret

28 Dec 2017



Police Scotland has spent tens of thousands of pounds in the last three years on legal costs to prevent information being released to the public, it has emerged.

Since 2015/16, the organisation – which the SNP created with the aim of being more transparent and accountable – spent £77,493 on challenging Freedom of Information requests.

The costs include a £63,000 bill for challenging Scotland's Information Commissioner on the release of details involving Covert Human Intelligence Sources.

That case was eventually lost, meaning police had to cover the judicial expenses of the commissioner.

In addition, £11,634 was spent resisting a call from the information commissioner who'd ordered police to hand over CCTV in relation to a criminal case.

And an appeal against the commissioner on facts surrounding a death cost the single force £2772.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said, considering Police Scotland continually claimed it was strapped for cash, the spending on legal fees was "excessive".

It's the latest example of the single force being criticised on its levels of transparency.

At the beginning of December, Audit Scotland rebuked the organisation for failing to properly declare payments made to senior staff by the Scottish Police Authority.

**Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:**

"These revelations are particularly embarrassing for an organisation which is supposed to be leading the way in transparency and accountability.

"People will think that Police Scotland should respect the rulings of

Scotland's Information Commissioner, not spend tens of thousands fighting them in court.

"This is all money which could have been invested in the frontline and supporting hardworking officers.

"Instead, it's been squandered on legal fees.

"With this level of waste, it's no wonder Police Scotland finds it difficult to make ends meet."

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## [Revealed: the £627m cost of council golden goodbyes](#)

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- Revealed: the £627m cost of council golden goodbyes

27 Dec 2017



Local authorities across Scotland have spent more than £627 million on exit packages for staff in the last six years, it has emerged.

Figures have shown more than 15,000 severance deals have been struck by councils for outgoing staff since 2011/12.

Over that time, the average package paid was £40,000.

The figures were published by Audit Scotland as part of a wider report into local government finances last month.

Last year alone, six severance deals a day were agreed by Scotland's 32 councils, at a cost of £78 million.

The Scottish Conservatives said local authorities, all of whom are under immense financial pressure, should tighten their procedures when it comes to golden goodbyes.

The same report by Audit Scotland stated that councils have £14.5 billion of debt, and some will have eaten through all their financial reserves within a couple years.

It added that £79 million in reserves was used last year for general running costs, and that 10 per cent of local authority budgets are spent servicing debt.

**Scottish Conservative local government spokesman Alexander Stewart said:**

“People will be horrified that hundreds of millions of pounds have been used in this way.

“Everyone understands the need for councils to become more efficient, and reducing the headcount in certain departments may be a way of doing that.

“But the average payout is £40,000, which means some senior staff will have been getting golden goodbyes to make the eyes water.

“In some cases contracts signed long ago may have dictated an overly-generous payment, but this is something local authorities need to clamp down on.

“There’s no point trying to make efficiency savings in one area while millions are being needlessly wasted in another.

“It’s no wonder some councils are burning through their cash reserves just to keep their head above water when this massive spend is considered.”

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## [Fewer people playing Scotland’s national sport](#)

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- Fewer people playing Scotland’s national sport

26 Dec 2017



Just eight per cent of people play football on a monthly basis, despite its reputation as Scotland’s national sport.

Official figures have revealed more people take part in cycling, running and swimming, despite efforts to get more people involved in the Beautiful Game.

The Scottish Household Survey showed, when asked what sport people have taken part in over the past four weeks, just one in 12 said football.

The figures have remained broadly static over the past few years, even though general participation in regular physical activity has risen from 73 per cent to 79 per cent since 2007.

The Scottish Conservatives said more had to be done to encourage people to play football and improve access to facilities in leisure centres.

The survey also revealed that, on a monthly basis, six per cent of people play golf, six per cent play snooker or pool, and two per cent have a game of bowls.

Physical activity is key to reducing rates of obesity in Scotland, which are soaring to their worst ever levels.

And the party said increasing participation in sport was also key to improving mental health.

**Scottish Conservative sport spokesman Brian Whittle said:**

“Football is supposed to be Scotland’s national sport, but – for a sport that so many watch, enjoy and talk about – surprisingly few of us seem to have the opportunity to get out there and kick a ball.

“That has to change.

“If we really are to boost levels of physical activity across the board, football should play a key part in that.

“We need to have better, more affordable access to sports facilities for all ages and abilities.

“Even the most basic things like taking down ‘no ball games’ signs and making sure the grass is cut on public pitches would give the public more opportunity to play.

“If more people played on a regular basis, not only would the nation’s health improve, but we could foster new talent for our national team as well.”

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## [Third of SNP education targets delayed, dropped or ducked](#)

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- Third of SNP education targets delayed, dropped or ducked

21 Dec 2017



A third of education targets set out by the SNP in its own report card have been delayed, dropped or ducked.

Ministers provided an update on 75 action points designed to help schools, including increasing teacher numbers and encouraging more to step up to

headteacher roles.

However, it has now emerged that the deadlines have been missed for 23 of these aims, despite Nicola Sturgeon claiming education is her government's top priority.

At First Minister's Questions today, Ruth Davidson highlighted three specific failings from the National Improvement Framework.

The Scottish Conservative leader said a flagship scheme to encourage high-quality graduates into teaching had not yet been launched, despite a pledge for it to be up and running by now.

In addition, a scheme to improve school inspections has also been delayed, while a dedicated programme to help teachers rise through the ranks to become heads has also been shelved.

**Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:**

"Nicola Sturgeon has made great play of the claim education is her number one priority.

"But when you go through 75 actions the Scottish Government specifically identified to improve education last year, it turns out a third have been delayed, dropped or ducked.

"A scheme to get more graduates into teaching is overdue, a drive to boost inspections has been shelved, and a plan for more headteachers kicked into the long grass.

"All the while, schools across the country are struggling to recruit teachers, and pupils are suffering as a result.

"Parents and teachers will look at these failings and conclude the First Minister is simply not living up to the commitment she's made on education."

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## [A&E waiting times worst in nearly 3 years](#)

19 Dec 2017



Accident and emergency activity statistics released by ISD Scotland have shown that the percentage of patients seen within the four hour target is at its lowest level since March 2015.

The figures released today show that only 86.9 per cent of patients are being seen within the four hour timescale.

The Scottish Government's own target is that 95 per cent of all patients should wait no longer than four hours in A&E departments.

In addition, the statistics from ISD Scotland show that NHS Lothian has the worst NHS board figures with only 77.3 per cent of patients seen within four hours.

And more worrying still, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary was the worst of all departments at just 64.1 per cent.

**Commenting on the figures Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:**

"SNP ministers have repeatedly boasted about A&E performances but these figures will give them nothing to crow about.

"The systematic failure of the Scottish Government to invest or support primary care has led to a predictable displacement of patient activity, driving up waiting times in emergency departments.

"The sad reality is that emergency departments cannot cope with this increase in patients, as well as seasonal pressures so patients are waiting longer, many of whom are in serious discomfort.

"We know from the recent RCN survey that many nurses are considering leaving the profession due to unacceptable demands and an inability to provide the care they want.

"So the situation will continue to deteriorate until the Scottish Government heeds our warnings and starts investing in primary care and supporting our GPs."

**And specifically on the situation in NHS Lothian;**

"These waiting times are particularly bad and patients in Lothians will be very worried about the delays they face should they need emergency care over Christmas.

"However worrying these waiting times are, hopefully they are now accurate, and NHS Lothian can now act to reduce them as a matter of urgency."