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23 Nov 2017



Cancer patients in every part of the country are being forced to wait months longer for cancer care, despite receiving urgent referrals from doctors.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed that, this year, a patient in Glasgow even had to wait 315 days for treatment to begin.

That's the second biggest wait since 2010, and underlines the challenges facing Scotland's hospitals in the face of staff shortages and dwindling resources.

Under Scottish Government targets, cancer patients urgently referred should begin treatment within 62 days.

However, shadow health secretary Miles Briggs uncovered the longest waits across Scotland through a parliamentary question.

It showed in 2017, as well as the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde patient, someone in the Western Isles waited 275 days.

Other health boards like Forth Valley (209 days), Highland (202 days) and Lanarkshire (195 days) also recorded lengthy individual waits.

The highest since 2010 was five years ago, when a cancer patient was forced to wait 399 days for treatment.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"This isn't just a one-off case of a patient having to wait hundreds of days because of a freak set of circumstances.

"Every year patients across Scotland are facing unacceptable delays for vital treatment.

"If a cancer patient is urgently referred by a doctor, they should not have to wait longer than the 62-day target timeframe.

"If anything, with so much at stake, they should be seen to even more quickly.

“This is just another damning statistic which exposes the SNP’s shambolic running of the NHS.

“If the Scottish Government is serious about helping those who need it most, it would sort this situation out as a matter of urgency.”

[SNP set to ‘waste’ £250k on citizens’ income scheme](#)

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The Scottish Government has confirmed it will spend £250,000 on a citizens’ income pilot scheme.

The move has been criticised by shadow social security secretary Adam Tomkins, who said the SNP was wasting taxpayers’ money on something it already knew wouldn’t be feasible.

The funding was confirmed in a letter to MSPs, and will see councils being handed the cash to give out over the next two years.

Ministers have pressed ahead with the trial scheme even though Scottish Government advisers have told them it would cost more than £12 billion a year.

The advice also stated all taxpayers would have to cough up a 50 per cent rate, while gender stereotyping would be further entrenched.

Despite that, social security secretary Angela Constance said in a letter to a Holyrood committee: “I have written to the chief executives of the four pilot authorities announcing that a fund of £250,000 is available for them to bid into, covering a two-year period from April 2018 to March 2020.”

Scottish Conservative shadow social security secretary Adam Tomkins said:

“This is confirmation of the SNP spending £250,000 of taxpayers’ money on something it knows it will never do.

“That’s a shameless waste of cash, and the nationalists should reconsider this pointless pilot.

“It doesn’t take long to conclude just how costly and counter-productive a citizens’ income would be.

“Nicola Sturgeon’s own adviser has already informed her this would cost more than £12 billion a year and see all taxpayers cough up a 50 per cent rate.

“This is a token effort to appease extreme elements of Scottish politics like the Greens, and that is not a good use of public money.”

SNP hypocrisy over budget ‘con’ claims

23 Nov 2017



SNP claims that £2 billion worth of new investment for Scotland announced in yesterday’s budget is a “con” have been ridiculed in Holyrood.

Finance secretary Derek Mackay dismissed yesterday’s substantial cash injection on the basis part of it was in the form of financial transactions, a position now backed by Nicola Sturgeon.

However, at First Minister’s Questions today, it was revealed that the SNP used hundreds of millions of pounds of the same transactions in its own budget in the last year.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson even pointed out that the £50 million announced so far of the SNP’s trumpeted Scottish Growth Scheme depends entirely on financial transaction funding.

In the Scottish Government’s 2017/18 budget, the SNP used financial transactions to invest £259.5 million in communities, social security and equalities; £59 million in the economy, jobs and fair work; and £11.8 million in education and skills.

The nationalists also used financial transactions to provide interest-free loans for low carbon vehicles.

Ruth pointed out today that when the UK Government used the method it was a “con”, yet when the Scottish Government utilised it, it was “a half billion pound vote of confidence in Scottish business, Scottish workers and the Scottish economy”.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The usual complaint from the SNP is that it’s not getting enough money.

“Now that money has arrived, the nationalists claim it’s just the wrong kind

of money.

“This is cash that could be spent funding housing or addressing fuel poverty, two massive issues in Scotland, yet Nicola Sturgeon doesn’t want to know.

“She should spend a little less time complaining about where the money is coming from and bit more thinking of the positive ways it could be used.

“This £2 billion is a substantial investment. Money is available now for the Scottish Government to direct ahead of its own budget.

“Instead of complaining about this cash, the SNP should get on with making sure it’s used properly.”

Scotland’s £2bn budget boost

23 Nov 2017



Philip Hammond has delivered a £2 billion boost for Scotland’s economy as part of today’s budget.

During his statement to parliament today, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said having his “ear bent” by the Scottish Conservatives’ 13 MPs had resulted in a number of positive measures for Scotland.

He confirmed that VAT on police and fire services would be scrapped from next year, after the SNP created the single organisations fully aware of the costly charges in 2013.

Duty on whisky will be frozen, meaning a bottle will be £1.15 cheaper next year than it would have been had Labour’s plans had been in place.

A range of tax breaks to help North Sea oil and decommissioning were unveiled, while further progress on city and region deals was also confirmed.

The Scottish Government will also be under pressure to mirror support for housing.

Mr Hammond announced stamp duty would be abolished for first-time buyers purchasing properties below £300,000.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said the impact of her party’s new MPs, who were elected in June, was considerably more notable than anything the SNP group had managed in recent years.

She also urged Nicola Sturgeon, with £2 billion in additional funding at her

disposal, to abandon plans to hike income tax north of the border.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“This is a budget that delivers for Scotland.

“Scottish Conservative MPs and MSPs have all made the case for key Scottish interests.

“The Chancellor has today shown he has listened and taken action.

“It makes clear that engaging positively with the UK Government will always see greater benefits for Scotland than continual grievance could ever hope to achieve.

“The Chancellor’s decision to freeze whisky duty gives a real shot in the arm to our most important export.

“I’m delighted our efforts to resolve the police and fire VAT issue have paid off.

“The tax reforms for our oil and gas industry will offer a fresh lifeline to the north east.

“We’re also seeing commitment to vital new city and regional growth deals across the country.

“All these measures were top Scottish Conservative priorities – and I’m delighted they’ve now been delivered.

“The budget hands the SNP government a £2 billion Barnett bonus.

“It’s funding that could now be used to help solve Scotland’s housing crisis, to upgrade infrastructure, and to support our schools and hospitals.

“That extra funding also means that SNP ministers must look again at their reckless plans to raise income tax in Scotland.

“As a result of the Chancellor’s decisions today they are getting £2 billion extra funding to help meet their own spending commitments.

“With income tax and stamp duty being cut south of the border, there is a growing tax gap between people in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK.

“The SNP can’t keep hitting Scots in the pocket – and need to hold off further tax rises in the Holyrood budget next month.

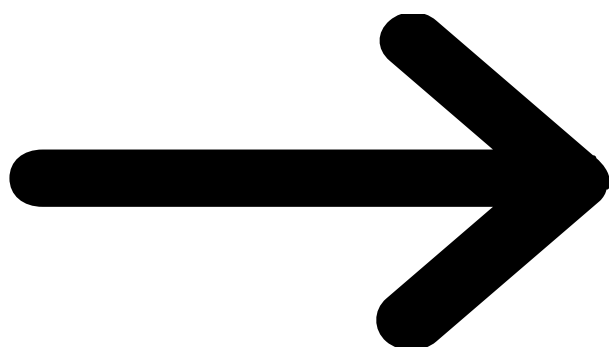
“The case for raiding the pay packets of ordinary Scottish families has collapsed.

“The Chancellor has delivered for Scotland. As we look ahead to the Scottish budget next month, it’s now vital that the SNP government follows suit.”

[Role of sunset clause crucial in minimum pricing law](#)

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21 Nov 2017



The role of a five-year sunset clause will be a crucial part of new alcohol minimum pricing legislation, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Health secretary Shona Robison confirmed today that she intended to introduce the law from May 2018, six years after the idea was formally brought forward by the Scottish Government.

Deputy leader Jackson Carlaw, who negotiated the original inclusion of a sunset clause allowing the scheme to be dropped if it wasn't working, said it was important the measures came in quickly.

And he stated the role of a sunset clause could be used across other contentious health policies in future, particularly in areas of public health like obesity.

In her statement to Holyrood today, Ms Robison added that the Scottish Whisky Association would pay the Scottish Government's costs for a recent Supreme Court legal battle, which ministers eventually won.

The Scottish Conservatives support the concept of minimum unit pricing, on the condition there is a sunset clause and that the case is legally sound.

Statistics released today showed there was a two per cent increase in people admitted to hospital because of alcohol last year.

It means nearly 100 people a day are hospitalised as a consequence of drink, while it was reported earlier this year that alcohol-related deaths are at a record high north of the border.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“This is a welcome step and the Scottish Government is right to introduce this as soon as possible.

“There is also a discussion to be had about the 50p rate. Not only is that figure now five years old, but will it be suitable for another five years as this policy develops?

“We sincerely hope this legislation leads to a reduction in the number of lives lost in Scotland to alcohol.

“This is also the first time a sunset clause has been used.

“It will be challenging to monitor the impact of this, and that’s something the Scottish Government will have to do very carefully over the coming years.

“But the sunset clause could also be a model for future controversial health legislation.”