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1 Nov 2017



The SNP has finally u-turned on its objection to creating a new anti-poverty group that would be directly accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

Earlier this year, the nationalists rejected calls by the Scottish Conservatives for a Poverty and Inequality Commission to be established, which would report directly to MSPs at Holyrood.

Instead, they attempted to create their own anti-poverty body which would have had no accountability to MSPs.

However, it has now been agreed the new commission first suggested by shadow social security secretary Adam Tomkins will come into effect from 2019.

The SNP had argued creating such a body would not prove “value for money” and would have “too much downtime”.

But opposition parties backed the idea, as did dozens of anti-poverty charities and organisations.

The necessary changes are expected to be made to the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill at stage three when it is voted on next week.

Scottish Conservative shadow social security secretary Adam Tomkins said:

“I’m glad the SNP has finally seen sense on this issue.

“Tackling poverty is one of the Scottish Parliament’s greatest priorities, which is why it’s so important to have a commission directly accountable to it.

“The SNP might like to talk a good game on poverty, but when it comes to action it is too often found wanting.

“Quite why the nationalists dug their heels in on this matter for so long is a mystery.

“Now the u-turn has been performed, it means the Scottish Parliament can hold this commission to account to ensure the right work is being done and targets are being hit.”

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The number of Scottish patients treated for eating disorders has increased by two-thirds in the space of a decade, official figures have revealed.

Two people a day are now admitted to hospital for conditions like anorexia and bulimia.

According to the Scottish Government statistics, 726 people were treated in 2015/16, the most recent year for which data is available.

That compares to 436 in 2005/06, a rise of 66 per cent.

And while the numbers dropped marginally from the previous year, some health boards saw record admission rates.

The figures were published following a parliamentary question by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

Health boards in Glasgow, Grampian, the Highlands and Tayside were among those to have record numbers in 2015/16.

Tomorrow, Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells will stage a members' debate on diabulimia, an eating disorder which affects patients with type one diabetes.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“People will be shocked to see just how much of a problem eating disorders have become in recent years.

“It's clear we all need to do much more to tackle these problems before it gets so serious someone has to be hospitalised.

“The statistics are there for everyone to see – in the space of a decade the scale of this problem has increased by two-thirds.

“It's time for all parties to work together to investigate how better to help people struggling with these conditions, particularly from a young age.

“This very much ties into the mental health agenda, and these numbers should remind us all that this is another major challenge facing hundreds of people across the country.”

To see a full copy of the statistics, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/s5w-11668.pdf>

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- New blow for named person as committee tells SNP to go back to the drawing board

27 Oct 2017



The SNP’s plan to appoint a state guardian for every young person in Scotland has been dealt a fresh blow by an influential Holyrood committee.

MSPs on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee have told ministers that the code of practice element of the named person proposals needs to be “revisited”.

The SNP was already in retreat over the controversial policy after the Supreme Court ruled elements of it unlawful.

Now its revised plans to address those concerns in relation to the code of practice and data sharing have also come under fire.

The committee said today: *“We recommend that the Government revisits its approach to the Code of Practice. Specifically, we want it to consider including the Code in subordinate legislation and, more importantly, giving the Parliament a vote on the final version.”*

Shadow education secretary Liz Smith said this latest development proved the named person policy was in “serious difficulty” and urged ministers to scrap the idea altogether.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This is confirmation that the Scottish Government’s attempts to revise named person policy is in serious difficulty.

“Holyrood’s Education Committee has now taken five evidence sessions in which the vast majority of submissions have made it abundantly clear that they do not know where they stand when it comes to the code of practice.

“This is because the SNP government has failed to publish a workable code.

“Instead we have something that will likely bear little resemblance to the final draft.

“The Scottish Government should do the decent thing and scrap the named person policy, and start again when it comes to prioritising the protection of vulnerable young people.”

To see the release from the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, visit:
<http://www.parliament.scot/newsandmediacentre/106482.aspx>

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27 Oct 2017



Figures referenced by the recent Audit Scotland report show that the Scottish Government has presided over a six per cent fall in GP Practices and a 12 per cent increase in practice lists over the last decade.

The figures come on the back of statistics showing that thousands of GPs have left the country to work abroad since 2008.

In addition, a BMA Survey of GPs in December 2016 found that 70 per cent felt they experienced significant work-related stress and 15 per cent felt their

stress was unmanageable.

More than half reported their workload had a negative impact on their commitment to their job.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“These figures demonstrate the total failure on health by the Scottish Government but tragically signal further disaster for primary care, the fundamental building block of our health service.

“The simple fact is that if our GPs continue to be driven away from Scotland’s health service practice lists will continue to grow and patients will have to wait longer for essential treatment.

“It is no surprise the public health isn’t improving and waiting time targets are being missed.

“Once again I call on the Scottish Government to prioritise primary care and commit 11 per cent of all NHS spending directly to GP Practices.

“Our ‘Save our Surgeries’ campaign has highlighted all these issues and will continue to promote solutions to help support our GPs.”

[Swinney’s STEM money should support science teaching in primaries](#)

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- Swinney’s STEM money should support science teaching in primaries

26 Oct 2017



Bursary money to boost teachers in STEM subjects should also be used to encourage more dedicated science teachers to work in primary schools, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The Scottish Government outlined its strategy for improving science, technology, engineering and maths education in Holyrood today.

It follows an announcement by education secretary John Swinney that £20,000 bursaries would be offered to people looking to change career to become STEM teachers.

As part of today’s debate, shadow education secretary Liz Smith said some of

the money set aside should be used to allow pupils in primaries four to seven to be taught dedicated science lessons.

A similar call was made two years ago by the Royal Society of Chemistry, on the basis that was the prime age to capture pupils' imagination, rather than waiting for secondary school.

The SNP rejected this at the time on the basis it didn't have the money.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"Now that John Swinney has found the money to offer these bursaries, some of this support should be aimed at getting dedicated science teachers into primary schools.

"As the experts have already said, it's at this age where the imagination of children can be best captured.

"That would improve education standards and address the issue of fewer youngsters succeeding in key STEM subjects.

"The money is there, the Scottish Government has confirmed that much.

"Now we have to see it used in the correct fashion."

Education secretary John Swinney announced his £20,000 STEM bursaries at the SNP conference earlier this month:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-41545499>