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20 Oct 2017

Nicola Sturgeon has once again stated that she will push ahead with trials of a citizen's income, despite having been told that the plan is unfeasible.

Speaking in Glasgow today Sturgeon said, "We are also going to work with interested local authorities to fund research into the feasibility of a citizen's basic income scheme."

While she admitted that "it might turn out not to be feasible", a civil service briefing handed to her in March already stated that the policy was a non-starter, and would cost taxpayers £12.3 billion a year.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that it shows just how far the First Minister is willing to go in order to keep the left flank of the independence movement on side.

Scottish Conservative shadow social security secretary Adam Tomkins MSP said:

"Nicola Sturgeon has already been told unequivocally that the idea of a citizen's income is a non-starter.

"Her civil servants stated to her that the idea it is totally unaffordable and unsustainable, yet she is continuing to press ahead with this trial despite knowing better.

"It simply shows the lengths that this First Minister will go to appease the extreme left of the pro-independence movement.

"Rather than pursue futile projects such as this she should be using government resources on schemes that actually stand a chance of improving the lives of Scots."

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19 Oct 2017



Around one in eight out of hours shifts in GP surgeries are left unfilled, a study has suggested.

Analysis of shifts in doctor surgeries at nights and weekends showed 12.8 per cent were vacant across the country.

In some health boards, more than a quarter of shifts went unfilled.

The statistics were obtained by the Scottish Conservatives, who asked for a snapshot of GP out of hours staff cover during a week in May in a bid to uncover the extent of the problem.

The responses indicate widespread staffing difficulties in GP surgeries north of the border.

Already this year it's been reported that a quarter of trainee posts in local practices are empty, while experts have warned there will be a shortfall of more than 800 doctors within a few years.

The SNP's disastrous workforce planning over recent years – despite being repeatedly warned about the challenges brought by an ageing population – has been blamed for the crisis.

The Scottish Conservatives have called for a larger proportion of the health budget to be invested in primary care in an attempt to improve service, take the strain off GPs, and make things easier for other parts of the NHS further down the line.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs warned that rate of unfilled shifts would be even more problematic as the winter months approach.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“This is yet another indication of the GP crisis which is gripping Scotland.

“It's incredible to think around one in eight GP out of hours shifts can't be filled purely because the SNP hasn't bothered to plan for the future properly.

“The NHS is on its knees in a number of areas, but that is particularly apparent in local GP practices.

“It means patients can’t get the help they need, and the hardworking doctors left behind are becoming increasingly over-stretched.

“And with the winter months well on their way, this crisis could have even more severe consequences.

“The SNP government has let it get to this stage, and now has to explain to patients north of the border what it is going to do to address it.”

The Scottish Conservatives asked all health boards for the percentage of unfilled out of hours shifts in GP practices for the week commencing May 22, 2017. The responses can be accessed here:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/00HResponses.zip>

Below is the proportion of unfilled out of hours GP shifts by health board for that week:

NHS Ayrshire and Arran – 16.4 per cent
NHS Borders – 4.5 per cent
NHS Dumfries and Galloway – 5.5 per cent
NHS Fife – n/a
NHS Forth Valley – 26 per cent
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde – 4 per cent
NHS Grampian – 7 per cent
NHS Highland – n/a
NHS Lanarkshire – 11.6 per cent
NHS Lothian – 7 per cent
NHS Orkney – 0
NHS Shetland – 0
NHS Tayside – 4.8 per cent
NHS Western Isles – 0

Scotland – 12.8 per cent

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18 Oct 2017



Nicola Sturgeon pressed ahead with plans to trial a basic income for everyone – despite civil servant briefings showing her it would cost taxpayers £12.3 billion a year.

Documents obtained by the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information have revealed the briefing on Citizen's Basic Income (CBI) handed to the First Minister in March.

It warned the plans would cost billions extra every year, and lead to every income tax payer in the country having to cough up a rate of 50 per cent.

The briefing stated: "It is a very costly policy that is unlikely to gain public acceptability and ultimately may not have the desired transformative effect."

The document was given to Nicola Sturgeon, finance secretary Derek Mackay, social security secretary Angela Constance and minister Jeane Freeman on March 2 by Liz Hawkins, the Scottish Government's housing and social justice director.

It warned CBI would "have little incentivising impact" and that "most governments will not be able to afford both CBI and a generous welfare state".

Experts also said it was "more likely to further entrench gender stereotyping".

Despite this, last month Nicola Sturgeon spoke of her fondness for the approach while unveiling her Programme for Government.

She told MSPs: "It is an idea that merits deeper consideration. I can therefore confirm that the Scottish Government will work with interested local authorities to fund research into the concept and feasibility of a citizen's basic income."

This was reinforced as part of her keynote SNP conference speech earlier this month, where she said: "Last year, this conference asked us to investigate the feasibility of a citizen's basic income. So we've announced the funding to do just that."

Scottish Conservative shadow social security secretary Adam Tomkins said:

"Nicola Sturgeon and her finance team were told in no uncertain terms that a scheme for citizen's basic income would be utterly unaffordable and not remotely sustainable.

"Despite these stark warnings, she continued to create an impression that she was going to introduce it.

“This suggests she is pandering to the extreme left of the Yes movement in the hope they won’t turn on her over poor polling and the fact separation is dead in the water.

“But this briefing makes plain just how unworkable the CBI approach would be.

“Instead of playing to the gallery, the First Minister should explain exactly where she’s going to find the extra £12.3 billion that would be required each year to fund it.

“Or perhaps she’d like to tell taxpayers, including those on low incomes, that they’ll have to give back half their pay packet to bankroll this vanity project.

“At the start of the year I was able to look into the feasibility of CBI and quickly conclude it would be damaging and impossible.

“It shouldn’t be beyond the wit of the SNP government to do the same.”

[Matheson – a justice secretary who won’t take responsibility for police](#)

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17 Oct 2017



Justice secretary Michael Matheson has been criticised for shirking responsibility for Police Scotland – after dodging a series of questions on the single force.

The Scottish Conservatives have highlighted six recent parliamentary questions when he was asked specifically about the country’s police service.

But instead of providing the information, he instead used a “copy and paste approach” to claim only Police Scotland itself could explain such matters.

Last week, when asked how many chief inspector posts were unfilled, Mr Matheson said it was “a matter for the chief constable”.

A month earlier, he used an identical excuse when challenged on the performance of control rooms.

In August, shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr sought information on overtime

costs at the troubled Police Scotland control centre in Dundee, and how many staff were employed there.

Days earlier he asked about a recent IT failing there which led to reports of police officers being unable to call on back-up.

On both occasions, Mr Matheson refused to answer, again saying it was the chief constable's responsibility.

And as far back as February this year, he described as a "matter for the chief constable" the issue of a database for vulnerable persons.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"This is the behaviour of a justice secretary who doesn't want to take responsibility for his brief.

"If Michael Matheson doesn't think policing matters are for him to get involved in, what exactly does he do with his day?

"It's not good enough for him to constantly issue a copy and paste response to important matters like the safety of officers, policing numbers and the wellbeing of vulnerable people.

"The fact there isn't even a working chief constable to refer these matters to at the moment makes this scenario all the more ridiculous.

"It's time Mr Matheson stepped up and took some responsibility for policing in Scotland.

"The SNP government created Police Scotland – it can't now simply retreat and pretend it has nothing to do with it now."

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5 Oct 2017



Councils should improve the way they collect data on the number of children caught carrying weapons in schools, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Around five instances a week are reported to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration where under 16s are found to be in possession of items such as knives.

However, nearly half of Scottish councils are unable to produce relevant statistics, meaning no clear picture of the extent of the issue is available.

The matter was raised today at First Minister's Questions by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson as the second anniversary approaches of the death of Aberdeen schoolboy Bailey Gwynne.

He was stabbed by a fellow pupil, with his death prompting a review of security in schools across the country.

In response, Nicola Sturgeon agreed to look at ways of ensuring all local authorities gathered data in the same way, to provide a clearer picture of the extent of knife crime in schools.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"We know the problem of knives in schools is an increasing one, with an 11 per cent increase in incidents referred last year alone.

"In the aftermath of the tragic death of Aberdeen pupil Bailey Gwynne, the Scottish Government rightly issued new guidance on weapons found in school.

"But nearly two years on, around half of Scottish councils are unable to confirm the number of weapons confiscated from pupils in their area.

"That's the kind of information parents and the wider public have a right to know.

"We think all local authorities should meet the same standards on this, and look forward to working with the Scottish Government to see how this could improve."