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- Record numbers hospitalised after overdosing on heroin and methadone

1 Sep 2017



A record number of people were admitted to hospital last year after overdosing on opioids, it has been revealed.

More than 2500 people were hospitalised in 2016, the highest number since 1999 when these particular records began.

It means nearly 50 people a week are rushed to hospital after taking opioid drugs, which are defined as heroin, methadone or opium.

The statistics emerged following a Parliamentary Question by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

They follow on from figures last month revealing record drug deaths for opioids, with 776 people losing their life in 2016.

Of the 2507 last year who were admitted after an overdose, 24 died in hospital as a result.

The Scottish Conservatives said these are the latest statistics which show the need for a new drugs strategy north of the border.

The party have repeatedly urged the Scottish Government to get tougher on dealers and suppliers who ruin lives and communities, and find alternatives to methadone for those addicts who want to give up drugs completely.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“This is the latest set of figures which show the severity of Scotland’s drug problem, which is now the worst in Europe.

“The sheer scale of heroin and methadone use is ruining lives left, right and centre.

“We already knew Scotland was experiencing a drugs deaths rate higher than anywhere else.

“Now we can see the extent of those overdosing on dangerous substances too.

“We need a new strategy urgently to help these vulnerable people beat this

lethal habit for good.

“The only crumb of comfort from these statistics is how relatively few deaths occur directly from these overdoses, and we have to thank our hardworking NHS staff for that.”

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29 Aug 2017



Shadow education secretary Liz Smith has demanded answers from her SNP counterpart after a report by public spending watchdogs was watered down by the Scottish Government.

It was reported today that civil servants demanded changes were made to an Audit Scotland paper on colleges.

As a result, reference to a 41 per cent drop in students was removed and replaced with more favourable narrative.

Now the Mid Scotland and Fife MSP has written to education secretary John Swinney to ask why the interference took place.

She said ministers were only allowed to make corrections when factual inaccuracies appeared in draft Audit Scotland documents.

But in this case, the “undue pressure” from the SNP government was clearly intended to “tone down” language which would have appeared critical of ministers’ performance.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“Civil servants and ministers are in a position to ask Audit Scotland to make corrections to a report if it is clear there are factual inaccuracies or errors.

“However, in the recent case of Audit Scotland’s review of colleges, documents reveal that undue pressure was brought to bear by a civil servant to alter the wording and the tone of the report.

“This is quite a separate matter.

“In the last session of the Scottish Parliament there was a great deal of debate about probity in government and the transparency of information which is provided in the public interest.

“In this instance, the pressure that was applied by a civil servant to tone down the scale of concern about the college sector was unacceptable and harmful to the image of government in Scotland.”

[Patients ‘failed’ as SNP miss health targets across the board](#)

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29 Aug 2017



Patients across Scotland are being “failed” by an SNP government which is continuing to miss a series of health targets, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Figures released today revealed people are still waiting too long for a range of treatments, and that a legal guarantee brought in by the nationalists is regularly breached.

The ISD statistics show that in June, just 84.8 per cent of patients were seen to within 18 weeks of referral, well below the target of 90 per cent.

That particular goal hasn’t been met since 2014, and means nearly 16,000 people waited too long for treatment to begin in June.

In addition, in the same month, nearly one in five patients awaiting a key diagnostic case were being forced to wait six weeks or more – the equivalent of 13,500 people. In some health boards, more than a third missed that target.

And for outpatients, more than a quarter had to wait longer than 12 weeks for an appointment, the worst performance in seven years.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“It’s becoming increasingly difficult to find an NHS target the SNP does consistently hit.

“Its stewardship of the health service has been nothing short of a disgrace, and patients right across the country are suffering as a result.

“This shameful performance from the nationalists means tens of thousands of patients every month receive a lower standard of care than they’re entitled to.

“Month after month the SNP government is criticised for these statistics, yet nothing ever seems to get better.

“The SNP isn’t just failing to hit its own targets, it’s failing vulnerable people in every part of Scotland.”

To see the full ISD Scotland report on waiting times, visit:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-08-29/2017-08-29-WT-18WksRTT-Report.pdf>

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-08-29/2017-08-29-WT-Diagnostic-Report.pdf>

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/2017-08-29/2017-08-29-WT-IPDCOP-Report.pdf>

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25 Aug 2017



The introduction of Frank’s Law must be a key part of the SNP’s supposed “radical relaunch” ahead of the new Holyrood term.

Nationalists claimed earlier in the summer that they were ready to ditch their agitation on independence and start focusing on running the country.

Now shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has written to Nicola Sturgeon demanding she introduces legislation to ensure those with conditions like dementia, but happen to be under the age of 65, are given equal access to free personal care.

A majority of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament support the campaign, and Miles already has a member's bill on the subject.

In his letter, he said if the SNP was serious about creating a fairer society in Scotland, the enacting of Frank's Law should be a priority.

Scottish Parliament business resumes on September 5, with ministers under pressure to make more use of the powers available to them after a year of inactivity.

Frank's Law is named after former footballer Frank Kopel, who was diagnosed with dementia at the age of 59 and passed away in 2014.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Nicola Sturgeon always claims she wants to create a fairer society in Scotland.

"There would be no better way of demonstrating that than ending the unfair age discrimination currently faced by those with conditions like dementia, but happen to be under 65.

"The SNP has briefed the media about a radical relaunch, amid accusations of neglecting the day job for the past decade.

"If that's to happen, the introduction of Frank's Law should be one of the top priorities.

"There is a majority of MSPs at Holyrood in favour of this, and it's time the First Minister recognised this.

"If the Scottish Government doesn't move on this urgently, my member's bill will carry on and seek to put an end to the current inequality that exists."

The SNP said it was set for a radical relaunch this summer:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/07/snps-radical-relaunch-doesnt-include-a-single-new-policy-2/>

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has launched a member's bill to introduce Frank's Law:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/07/campaign-goes-live-on-franks-law/>

For more information on the campaign, visit:

<http://frankslaw.org/>

Scottish Government 'sluggish' in making social care changes

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24 Aug 2017



SNP ministers have been “sluggish” in implementing changes to health and social care, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

A report by Audit Scotland stated while some progress had been made in implementing Self-directed Support, there was still more to be done.

The organisation added that the decade-long strategy was now in its seventh year, yet many service users were still to experience change.

Launched in 2010, the SDS initiative was designed to allow individuals and families, rather than social workers, to make the majority of decisions in relation to their care.

It was argued at the time that this would improve a number of areas, including dignity for service users and the ability to make informed choices.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the move to give people more choice over the health and social care support they need was welcome, but far too many were still awaiting the chance to take control.

Age Scotland added that people need more information relating to how they can access that personal support.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“The change to allow people to have more control over the support they received was welcome.

“However, the Scottish Government has been sluggish in ensuring this option is available to everyone.

“It would appear from the Audit Scotland findings that, having made this change in legislation, the SNP has taken its foot off the gas.

“As the auditors note, we are now seven years into a 10-year strategy, but it’s a strategy which – as it stands – is leaving far too many people behind.

“It’s clear the Scottish Government needs to do more to support these vulnerable people.”