

[More than 1000 mental health patients sent to other boards for care](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- More than 1000 mental health patients sent to other boards for care

17 Aug 2017



More than 1000 mental health patients have been sent to other health boards for treatment in the past three years, new figures have revealed.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives showed patients being sent between NHS boards north of the border, with some even being asked to travel to England.

In Glasgow, there was an example of a patient being sent 480 miles to Tavistock in Devon, and to parts of London.

The Freedom of Information request showed the conditions suffered by those being transferred elsewhere included eating disorders, bipolar, severe depression and learning disabilities.

In total, 1007 mental health patients were asked to travel “out of area” between 2014/15 and 2016/17, the equivalent of 17 a week.

NHS Highland had the highest number of instances with 295, followed by Fife with 229.

Health boards serving large cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh were less likely to send patients elsewhere, the figures showed.

The Scottish Conservatives said while it was understandable some patients had to travel to receive specialist care, the numbers were too high given that mental health is supposed to be a priority issue for the Scottish Government.

The statistics showed 334 people were moved in 2014/15, followed by 370 a year later, and 303 last year.

Scottish Conservative mental health spokesman Annie Wells said:

“There will always be cases when it’s in the patient’s best interests to be sent elsewhere for treatment.

“But the scale of these figures suggests some health boards in Scotland just aren’t equipped to deal with a range of conditions.

“All sides of the political debate in Scotland agree that mental health should have a parity of esteem with physical health.

“But if that’s to be the case, people need to be able to rely on their own health board for treatment.

“In cases of exceptionally rare and challenging conditions it can make sense for everyone for a patient to go elsewhere for care.

“However, many of the conditions set out here are not rare, and people would expect at least one of their local hospitals to be able to cope with it.”

Below is the number of patients sent to other health boards for mental health treatment in the last three years:

NHS Ayrshire and Arran – 73
NHS Borders – 94
NHS Dumfries and Galloway – n/a
NHS Fife – 229
NHS Forth Valley – 52
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde – 17
NHS Grampian – 151
NHS Highland – 295
NHS Lanarkshire – n/a
NHS Lothian – 14
NHS Orkney – n/a
NHS Shetland – n/a
NHS Tayside – 28
NHS Western Isles – 54
Total – 1007

[Give headteachers power to ban mobile phones in schools](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Give headteachers power to ban mobile phones in schools

16 Aug 2017



Headteachers should have clear guidance allowing them to remove smartphones from school if they deem it necessary, a Scottish Conservative MSP has said today.

It follows academic evidence that restricting access to smartphone use by

pupils can boost educational attainment – and reduce educational inequality.

No guidance has been issued to Scottish schools on smartphone technology since 2013, during which time mobile phone usage has increased by more than a third among the population.

Michelle Ballantyne, the party's spokesman for childcare and early years, said today that a ban should exist in primary schools and restrictions on use should be introduced in secondary school where heads deem it necessary.

It comes after a major paper by the London School of Economics declared "schools that restrict mobile phones subsequently experience an improvement in test scores".

It also found that "low-achieving students are more likely to be distracted by the presence of mobile phones" meaning that "banning mobile phones could be a low-cost way for schools to reduce educational inequality".

However, the 2013 guidance issued by the Scottish Government declares that it is "unreasonable and impractical to attempt to impose a ban" on mobile phones in schools.

Now the South Scotland MSP has called for that guidance to change if attainment is to be improved.

Scottish Conservative early years spokeswoman Michelle Ballantyne said:

"We are all becoming more and more reliant on smartphones and we know parents see them as valuable to ensure they can keep in contact with their children before and after school.

"But we do need to get the balance right.

"The evidence suggests that excessive smartphone use in schools can reduce educational attainment, particularly among low-achievers.

"At the same time, we know that online bullying is a growing problem in school.

"Many primary school teachers would like to see a ban on smartphones, something I support.

"And in secondary, headteachers who want to restrict the use of smartphones if they think it is necessary should be supported to do so.

"Given the explosion of smartphone use over the last few years, the Scottish Government should be looking again at its four-year old guidance.

"This may be a cost-free way to help boost standards in classrooms all over Scotland, giving teachers the support they need to deliver the high quality education we all want for pupils."

A study by the London School of Economics concluded in 2015 that schools which banned mobile phones saw an increase in test scores – with improvements particularly pronounced among low-achievers
<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1350.pdf>

[Demands for new strategy after scale of drugs deaths revealed](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Demands for new strategy after scale of drugs deaths revealed

15 Aug 2017



The Scottish Government must urgently embark on a new drugs strategy after figures revealed deaths had doubled in the past decade.

Statistics released today showed there were 827 drug-related deaths north of the border in 2016, an increase of almost a quarter from the previous year.

The report said Scotland's drugs death rate was now two-and-a-half times that of the rest of the UK.

And while the Scottish Government claimed last month it would "refresh" drugs strategy, shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said that was not enough, and a full parliamentary review was needed.

Methadone, the substance prescribed by the NHS to get addicts off heroin, contributed to 42 per cent of the deaths, a new record.

And legal highs, or new psychoactive substances, were present in 286 of the fatalities recorded last year.

Males accounted for the majority of deaths, with 35 to 44 being the age group most affected.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"These figures are nothing short of appalling.

"Every year hundreds of lives in Scotland are being wasted because of a drugs culture that's been allowed to escalate out of control.

“People will be stunned that the death rate here is more than twice that of the rest of the UK, and that poses some extremely tough questions for the Scottish Government.

“For decades now we’ve had a drugs policy that simply parks people on methadone programmes, offering them zero hope of ever beating addiction completely.

“Not only is that methadone leaving vulnerable individuals in limbo, but it’s killing hundreds of people too.

“We now want a change to get people out of a life of drug and substance addiction.

“Cuts to alcohol and drugs partnerships need to be reversed now, and people need more direct access to physical support.

“A strategy refresh won’t cut it. We need a full parliamentary review of drugs policy in Scotland.

“Holyrood can implement policies that make a real difference to people’s lives, yet those who have been marginalised and forgotten the most are drug users.

“These statistics must serve as an abrupt wake-up call for the SNP.”

To see the full report, visit:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/drug-related-deaths/drd2016/16-drug-rel-deaths.pdf>

[Ministers must start recording figures on acid attacks](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Ministers must start recording figures on acid attacks

11 Aug 2017



The Scottish Government should start collating figures on the growing problem of acid attacks, an MSP has said.

A number of recent incidents have taken place across the UK amid calls for tougher sentences on perpetrators.

It has now emerged, following a parliamentary question, that ministers here don't collect statistics on acid attacks, meaning there's no way of telling how often they occur.

In his answer to Scottish Conservative MSP Rachael Hamilton, justice secretary Michael Matheson said: "Information on the number of acid attacks over the last five years is not held centrally. The statistics for assault held do not differentiate when corrosive substances have or have not been used."

He added that ministers are working closely with counterparts in the UK Government on an action plan, which includes looking at online sales of acid materials which could be used in an attack.

Last month, a man was found guilty of an acid attack on a journalist in Glasgow, and a schoolgirl in East Lothian was jailed this week for a similar assault.

The MSP for Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire said while it was understandable the Scottish Government didn't yet have statistics, it had to start collecting them in light of recent incidents.

Scottish Conservative MSP Rachael Hamilton said:

"Acid attacks appear to be a fairly new phenomenon, and authorities are still getting to grips with how best to deal with them.

"But there's no question they are becoming more of a problem, with a series of high profile incidents across the UK.

"That's why it's essential the Scottish Government starts collating these figures so we can assess the scale of the issue.

"Ministers are able to publish statistics on other crimes, and it's now time for acid attacks to be included too.

"These are devastating attacks which change the lives of victims for ever and support mechanisms must be put in place for those affected.

"We need to do our very best to stamp these out, and assessing the scale of the problem in Scotland would be a good place to start.

"Scotland is a safe place to live, work and visit and we want it to remain that way.

"We need to engage with retailers to ensure that harmful substances are sold responsibly."

Below is the parliamentary question from Rachael Hamilton, and the answer from Michael Matheson:

10 August 2017

Index Heading: Learning and Justice

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many acid attacks there have been in each of the last five years, and what action it is taking to reduce the number of and prevent such attacks.

S5W-10337

Michael Matheson:

Information on the number of acid attacks over the last five years is not held centrally. Where someone uses acid or other corrosive substances to attack another person, a range of general criminal offences can be used to prosecute including the common law of assault. The statistics for assault held do not differentiate when corrosive substances have or have not been used.

The Scottish Government is committed to doing whatever it can within our powers to ensure our communities are safe from harm. This includes any steps that can be taken in relation to the availability of corrosive substances that can have such real and lasting harm if used against another person or property.

The UK Government has announced plans to prepare an action plan to tackle the use of acid or other corrosive substances in violent attacks. This follows a spate of such incidents in London. The action plan focuses on:

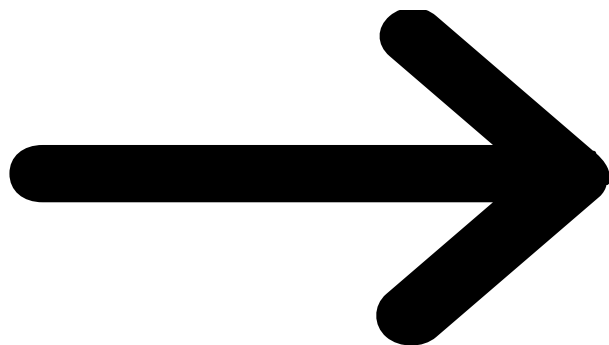
- effective law enforcement;
- ensuring legislation covering the use of acid and other corrosives in attacks is understood and consistently applied;
- working with retailers to restrict access to acids and other very harmful products; and
- ensuring effective support for victims through both the Criminal Justice System and health services.

Along with considering the operation of the criminal law of Scotland in this area, I can advise that the Scottish Government will be working closely with the UK Government on such issues as the online sales of corrosive substances as it is apparent that effective steps in that specific area will need to be taken on a consistent basis across the whole of the UK if possible.

[The left's love-in for Venezuela 'an embarrassment for Holyrood'](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- The left's love-in for Venezuela 'an embarrassment for Holyrood'

3 Aug 2017



MSPs who've publicly supported Venezuela's socialist regime should admit their mistake, as the country stands on the brink of disaster.

Opposition leaders have been hauled from their homes and taken to prison, while the UK Government has advised all British nationals to leave the country.

In addition, voting firms say the weekend's election was almost certainly "fixed".

Despite this, a number of SNP, Labour and Green politicians have been gushing in their praise for the hard-left regime.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said their approach was "an embarrassment for Holyrood", and that their respective leaders should distance themselves from the remarks.

Several parliamentary motions have been tabled praising the Venezuelan government, including the late Hugo Chavez.

Labour's Neil Findlay has been effusive in his praise for both Chavez and current president Nicolas Maduro, hailing their "social reforms aimed at addressing the legacy of inequality" and "governing in the interests of the Venezuelan people".

Fellow Labour member Elaine Smith urged MSPs to "note the reported international praise for Venezuela's electoral system". In the latest vote, the government there said turnout was more than eight million, while the opposition put the figure at 2.5 million amid reports of deserted polling stations.

Nationalist MSP Sandra White applauded authorities for “transforming Latin America into a progressive area”, a motion signed by dozens of other MSPs.

And in 2010 Jamie Hepburn, now a Scottish Government minister, said: “Venezuela has been transformed through the progressive policies pursued by the Chavez administration in the last decade.”

That motion was signed by, among others, Joe Fitzpatrick and Aileen Campbell.

Greens Ross Greer and John Finnie have also praised the left-wing administration on social media.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“This lefty love-in for the Venezuelan government has to stop.

“It’s an embarrassment for Holyrood.

“It’s all very well for left-wing politicians to offer misty-eyed praise for a regime they’d love to see in place across Scotland and the UK.

“But the fact is it’s a brutal dictatorship which has brought Venezuela to its knees.

“Now opposition leaders are being ripped from their beds in the middle of the night, in front of their families, and thrown in jail. Presumably, as an opposition politician, Neil Findlay wouldn’t like this to happen to him.

“It’s time for the Scottish Parliament to wake up to this nonsense.

“These MSPs have to stop behaving like short-sighted student politicians and realise that, in the real world, this socialist experiment has been nothing short of devastating.”