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- Drop in youngsters going to 'positive destinations'

20 Jun 2017



The number of school leavers ending up in “positive destinations” has fallen for the first time in five years.

Figures released today show 8.6 per cent of young people are deemed to have become unemployed on leaving school, instead of going on to work, training or further education.

That compares to eight per cent last year, and is the first decline of that trend since 2011.

The Scottish Government report also showed little change in the closing of the attainment gap when it comes to positive destinations, with the gap actually widening slightly from last year.

While 96.2 per cent of those from the least deprived backgrounds ended up in positive destinations in 2015/16, just 85 per cent of those from the poorest did – a gap of 11.2 percentage points.

The gap in 2014/15 was 10 points, although was as high as 13.4 in 2011/12.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This is another indicator on education which has gone down on Nicola Sturgeon’s watch.

“The number of young people going on to positive destinations is one of the First Minister’s go-to statistics when she is under pressure.

“Now she can’t even say that is increasing.

“What’s more, the likelihood of a school-leaver ending up at university, college, training or work is still far too dependent on their background.

“No real improvement has been made on that front either, and the SNP is running out of excuses about why that is.”

To see the full report, visit:

[SNP forced into 'major u-turn' on state guardians](#)

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- SNP forced into 'major u-turn' on state guardians

20 Jun 2017



The Scottish Government has announced a major u-turn in relation to its controversial named person policy following a Supreme Court ruling.

Today, education secretary John Swinney revealed public bodies operating the scheme will be forced to think twice before sharing information about a young person or their family.

That means parents who do not accept the advice of named persons will not be subsequently viewed with suspicion by authorities, the Scottish Conservatives said.

The change follows a ruling last year by the UK Supreme Court which found aspects of the SNP's state guardian legislation unlawful.

Mr Swinney set out the changes as part of the Children and Young People (Information Sharing) (Scotland) bill.

The Scottish Conservatives said while the clarification on data sharing was welcome, serious concerns about the legislation remain.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"The named person policy was a huge mistake from beginning to end which is why the Scottish Government has been forced into a major u-turn.

"The announcement today effectively means that no parent will now be forced to accept the advice from his or her child's named person and that refusal to accept advice will no longer be treated with suspicion by the authorities.

"The Supreme Court ruling made clear that the data-sharing aspects of the Act were unlawful on account of the fact that they had the potential to contravene other legislation and to allow state intrusion into family life.

"Quite rightly, the vast majority of parents found that unacceptable.

“The Scottish Conservatives believe that the revised bill still raises many questions and it also lays bare the extent of the expense to the taxpayer of this ill-conceived policy.”

More information on the bill is here:

<https://news.gov.scot/news/supporting-children-and-families-1>

The Scottish Conservatives have opposed the named person scheme from the outset:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/named-person/>

[Speed camera income hits 3-year peak](#)

19 Jun 2017



Speed cameras across Scotland raked in more than £5 million last year, the highest since 2014.

The devices across the country – which issue motorists who break the speed limit with automatic fines – resulted in £5,095,100 being paid to courts.

That’s £200,000 more than the previous year, and compares to just £4.6 million two years ago.

The statistics were revealed following a Freedom of Information request by the Scottish Conservatives.

Cameras in Tayside, Central and Fife produced the most money – raking in £1.3 million – followed by Grampian and the Highlands and Islands, which generated £1.2 million.

Across Scotland there are more than 200 fixed speed cameras.

Today’s statistics show they bring in £14,000 a day.

The Scottish Conservatives said while speed cameras had a role to play in improving safety, it was important they weren’t merely seen as cash cows.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Liam Kerr said:

“Motorists completely accept speed cameras have a place on Scotland’s roads to ensure safe driving.

“But there is a widespread suspicion that these are set up not to reduce speed, but to generate money from those edging over the various speed limits

they police.

“The fact that an ever-increasing amount of money is being generated from motorists for whom driving is becoming ever more expensive, will only reinforce this view that they are first and foremost simply being used as revenue-generators.

“Speed cameras should be situated where their presence has a demonstrable positive impact on road safety and accident prevention.

“Too many seem to be placed in areas such as the first clear straight on an A-road, ensuring that those carrying out an appropriate, safety conscious, overtaking manoeuvre but exceeding the speed limit are caught out.”

To see the table revealing speed camera income, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Speedcams.pdf>

[Now SNP must publish its own damning CAP report](#)

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15 Jun 2017



The SNP has been urged to change its mind about keeping secret a damning report into the farmer payments fiasco.

Earlier today, Audit Scotland revealed it would be 2018 “at the earliest” before the Common Agricultural Payments crisis was sorted, and warned of further problems for farmers across the country.

However, the Scottish Government also has its own report into what went wrong, and has again confirmed its intention not to publish it.

Answering a question from Scottish Conservative MSP Finlay Carson, rural affairs secretary Fergus Ewing merely said “publishing such detail could compromise the security of the CAP payments IT platform”.

He added that “improvements identified in the report are already underway”

and that his officials were working with the company behind the failed IT system.

MSPs on the rural economy and connectivity committee saw parts of the report – carried out by firm Fujitsu – and described it as “highly critical” and “damning”.

Despite that, and the fact Audit Scotland’s own report was made public this morning, the SNP still wants to keep the findings secret.

Scottish Conservative Galloway and West Dumfries MSP Finlay Carson said:

“Quite frankly, this stinks of a cover-up, particularly when Audit Scotland feels able to make public its own report into this fiasco.

“The SNP has presided over a CAP crisis which has seen Scotland’s rural communities starved of hundreds of millions of pounds.

“Now, in another blow to farmers, the SNP has ruled out publishing a report that might help us all get to the bottom of these many issues.

“That is an insult to everyone in Scotland who cares about our rural communities.

“It’s clear the Scottish Government is more concerned with saving face and playing politics than getting down to the job of serving our vital rural communities.”

Below is a parliamentary question from Scottish Conservative MSP Finlay Carson, and the answer from rural affairs secretary Fergus Ewing:

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): “To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish the report by Fujitsu regarding the IT system used to process CAP payments.”

S50-01046

Fergus Ewing:

“The report from Fujitsu contains sensitive commercial information as well as technical detail which has implications for cyber-security – publishing such detail could compromise the security of the CAP payments IT platform and, at this critical juncture in the payments schedule, I’m sure the member would agree that would not be a desirable outcome.

I can reassure the member that improvements identified in the Report are already underway and that my officials are working with CGI, the main IT supplier, and Fujitsu on an incremental improvement programme to provide longer term sustainability, scalability and flexibility to the CAP payment system.”

Audit Scotland blasted the Scottish Government's failed CAP payments in a hard-hitting report published this morning:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40274009>

When the Fujitsu report was first shown to MSPs, the Scottish Conservatives urged the SNP to publish it in full:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/05/snp-must-publish-secret-report-which-blasts-cap-payment-chaos/>

[Sturgeon secretly plans to put indyref2 back on the table](#)

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14 Jun 2017



The SNP is secretly planning to relaunch a drive for a second independence referendum, despite voters rejecting plans at the General Election last week.

It was reported this morning that First Minister Nicola Sturgeon met with key advisers to discuss the best way of putting separation back on the table.

The Scottish Conservatives have criticised the move, saying it's time the Scottish Government focused on the day job.

Yesterday, all 13 Scottish Conservative MPs issued a joint statement urging Nicola Sturgeon to "face reality" on a referendum re-run.

Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said:

"Nicola Sturgeon has lost the plot.

"Fewer than 40 per cent of voters last week supported the SNP's reckless plan for a second referendum.

"Yet now we learn she is secretly planning to put it back on the table.

"The First Minister only wants to listen to those in her own party on this issue, and she's turning a tin ear to everyone outside the SNP who just want a break from her political games.

"Her panicked attempt to refute these plans will fool no-one.

"The truth is that this is a First Minister who has given up representing Scotland and is now focused solely on her discredited and unwanted plan to drag us back to a second referendum.

"Whatever challenges are thrown up by Brexit, none are solved by tearing our own union in two.

"Nicola Sturgeon must focus on schools and our NHS and take her threat of a second referendum off the table now.

"A failure to do so will see what little credibility she has left draining away entirely."

To see the original Sun story, visit:

<https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/scottish-news/1144651/nicola-sturgeon-top-lieutenants-plotting-indyref2-dream-alive/>

Yesterday, Scottish Conservative MPs issued a joint statement urging Nicola Sturgeon to "face reality" on indyref2:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/new-mps-demand-sturgeon-faces-up-to-indyref2-reality/>