

Scottish Conservatives propose major reform of key element of Curriculum for Excellence

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18 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have today called for a complete reform of National 4 so that all pupils studying at this level will be required to sit exams in both basic literacy and numeracy.

At present, pupil assessment in National 4 is based only on teacher judgment and does not allow pupils to gain formal qualifications in the basic skills – something which many parents, teachers and employers believe is a serious flaw within Curriculum for Excellence.

Four years on from Nicola Sturgeon’s request to “judge me on education” the recent SQA results show that Scottish education has “gone backwards” on her watch and urgent reform is necessary.

Scottish Conservative Shadow Education Secretary Liz Smith has said that National 4 should be completely reformed so that all pupils are required to sit examinations in basic literacy and numeracy.

The Scottish Conservatives are also calling for:

- The SNP to reverse their decision to take Scotland out of the TIMSS and PIRLS measurements.
- Education Scotland to no longer be the “judge and jury” in charge of both curriculum development and inspection.
- Full clarity within curriculum guidance.

Scottish Conservative Shadow Education Secretary Liz Smith said:

“Four years ago, Nicola Sturgeon asked us to “judge her on education.”

“That statement now has a very hollow ring to it. No-one can pretend that all is well in Scotland’s schools. Four years on, the recent SQA results show that Scottish education has gone backwards.

“The pass rates for Higher and Advanced Higher are the lowest since the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) was introduced and there has been a fall in

Higher pass rates for four consecutive years.

“That is a trend and a very worrying one, especially when the Higher is supposed to be the “gold standard” of Scottish education.

“Our pupils and schools are being let down by the SNP’s botched implementation of the curriculum and its qualifications system.

“Above all, National 4 should be completely reformed with new exams in basic literacy and numeracy that ensure every pupil leaves school able to read, write and count to a high level.

“A renewed focus on core skills in literacy and numeracy at the Broad General Education (BGE) phase and National 4 level would be far more complementary to vocational training and better prepare young people for the world of work.”

[Dundee drug report shows need for cross-sector approach](#)

16 Aug 2019



The Dundee Drugs Commission report published today shows the need for more cross-sector working to better support addicts and their families.

It highlights the issues in the current fractured system, and recommends the development of a ‘whole systems’ model of care.

The Scottish Conservatives have welcomed the report, with many of the findings being mirrored in their ‘Addiction Strategy: Life Plan’, which was published last year and aims to halve the number of drug deaths in Scotland over the next five years.

They said that the SNP Government must now react to these findings and engage with opposition parties to develop a new approach to the drug death emergency in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“I welcome the Dundee Drugs Commission report and hope this will form an important contribution to the new national approach to develop real solutions to the drugs deaths crisis.

“The findings clearly point towards the need to develop cross-sector working to help support addicts and their families, with significant concerns being expressed over the fractured system of treatment and support.

“This system of services and often ‘Cinderella’ approach to funding for drug and addiction services across Scotland is something SNP Ministers have been consistently challenged on.

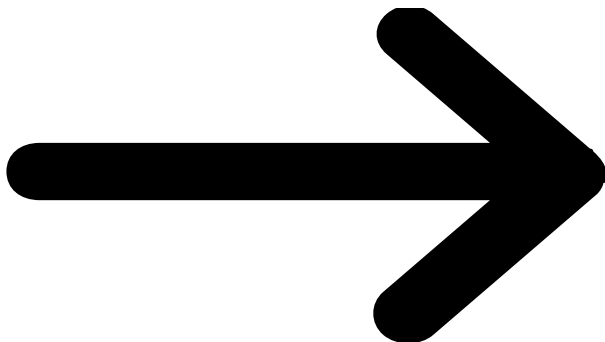
“I have spent the summer listening to those at the front line of drug and addiction services in order to develop the new cross-portfolio approach that is needed to turn this national public health emergency around.

“It’s now time the SNP did the same, and they need to take action on the recommendations contained within this report.

“SNP Ministers must constructively engage with opposition MSPs to take forward a new approach to the provision of NHS and third sector rehabilitation and support services.”

[Corbyn surrenders on Indyref2](#)

15 Aug 2019



Jeremy Corbyn has confirmed that the Labour party would not block a second Scottish independence referendum.

In comments to the BBC the Labour leader said, with reference to a request for Indyref2 from the SNP “It’s not up to parliament to block it”.

It confirms comments made last week by shadow chancellor, John McDonnell who also said he would not block a second referendum – in complete contradiction to Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard.

Jackson Carlaw, Scottish Conservative deputy leader said:

“Simply put, Jeremy Corbyn has surrendered on a second independence referendum.

“Both he and John McDonnell are preparing to hand Nicola Sturgeon the referendum she wants in exchange for SNP support for a Labour government.

“Scottish Labour has been left dangling in the breeze – they are utterly

irrelevant even to their own party.

“It’s clear who’s in charge of Scottish Labour and it’s not Richard Leonard.

“It’s a complete betrayal of thousands of Labour voters in Scotland who support the Union.

“It shows once and for all that Corbyn cannot be trusted to defend Scotland’s decision to remain in the UK.”

Rise in drug deaths partly to blame for life expectancy stall

14 Aug 2019



Life expectancy in Scotland has stalled in part due to the rise in drug deaths according to the latest report from the National Registers of Scotland.

The report, Scotland’s Population 2018 – The Registrar General’s Annual Review of Demographic Trends states that “The largest causes of the stall in life expectancy are the slowing of improvements seen in the reduction of deaths from heart disease and increases in drug related deaths”.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that this “highlights the national scandal that is Scotland’s high number of drug deaths” and called on the SNP to participate in a cross-party summit on the issue.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

“This shocking revelation highlights the national scandal that is Scotland’s high number of drug deaths.

“Too many Scots lives are being destroyed by addiction while the SNP continues to pursue its misguided maintenance policy.

“The Scottish Conservatives have already called for a cross-party summit in order to understand and tackle this problem but the SNP has failed to engage.

“We have also spelled out our approach to tackling addiction and set a target to reduce drug deaths by 50% over the next five years.

“This is a crisis that the Scottish Conservatives are committed to solving but the SNP must act.”

[SNP cutting dedicated hospital beds as dementia deaths soar 175% since 2004](#)

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14 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have criticised the SNP's reduction of hospital beds for dementia patients as the latest figures reveal that deaths from dementia have almost tripled in the last 15 years.

The figures published in Scotland's Population 2018 – The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends shows that dementia deaths have risen from 2354 in 2004 to 6484 in 2018, a staggering increase of 175 percent.

The statistics come after a parliamentary written answer revealed that the SNP has cut the number of "psychiatry of old age" hospital beds, the vast majority of which cater for patients with conditions like dementia, by over a third, to only 1774.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the figures are more evidence of a dementia 'time-bomb' and that the SNP must stop ignoring the rapidly increasing number of dementia patients and their families.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

"This is yet more evidence of the dementia time-bomb in Scotland and the SNP must take notice.

"This rapidly increasing number of people dying with dementia cannot be ignored as it simply highlights how many more people and their families also need support for those living with dementia.

"Recent figures have shown that rather than accommodating these changing pressures, the SNP is actually cutting the number of specifically designated hospital beds.

"The SNP's failure to design services that cater for dementia sufferers unfairly burdens relatives, patients and social care services.

"We know this trend is going to continue but the SNP has failed to prepare

either hospital care or community care services to support people living with dementia and their families.

“The SNP has been in sole charge of health and community care for 12 years and it has utterly failed to design a service fit for the long term.

“Scottish Conservatives successfully forced SNP Ministers to adopt Frank’s Law to deliver free personal care for people under 65 living with life limiting conditions.

“We need to see a new focus and vision to support the increasing number of people in Scotland living with dementia.”