

# Exam results 'shame SNP complacency' on education

6 Aug 2019



Today's exam results which show the persistent decline in attainment should "shame" the SNP government's complacency on education, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It was revealed this morning that Higher passes are down two per cent from last year, dropping below 75 per cent.

Advanced Higher passes have also reduced from 80.5 per cent in 2018 to 79.4 per cent this year.

Only National 5 results showed any improvement, but even they remain lower than every other year except last year.

Attainment in core subjects is down across the board, with Higher pass rates in the key areas of English down 2.7 per cent, and maths 2.1 per cent.

Shadow education secretary Liz Smith said the dip in pass rates was not only bad news for pupils and their career ambitions, but could damage the economy too in future years.

## **Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:**

"It is important, first of all, to warmly welcome all those individual pupils who have been successful in these exams.

"A lot of hard work goes into months of study and due recognition should be given to their teachers too.

"However, the overall national trend is a matter of very serious concern given the fall in attainment levels across the board with the exception of National 5.

"John Swinney has made a great deal in recent years about the Higher being the 'gold standard' of Scottish education.

"That claim now looks very hollow given further drops in pass rates, and it comes at the same time as last year's improvement in the Advanced Higher has been reversed.

"The whole structure of the Curriculum for Excellence has been brought into question by these results.

"We have known for months that subject choice has been squeezed and that there have been deeply worrying downturns in some key subject areas which

have a major impact on the economy.

“Mr Swinney has persistently refused to listen to what teachers, parents and young people are telling him. These results shame that complacency.”

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## [Audit Scotland must investigate Sick Kids hospital scandal](#)

4 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have called for Audit Scotland to undertake a full audit into the building of the Sick Kids hospital in Edinburgh after fresh concerns over the safety of the new hospital were raised by senior union official, Tam Waterson.

Mr Waterson has revealed that there are still major worries over drainage as well as ventilation, and questioned the competence of the current Health Secretary Jeane Freeman.

### **Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said;**

“The new Sick Kids hospital was meant to provide world-class state of the art care facilities for children across Edinburgh and the east of Scotland.

“Instead, it’s been a complete farce from the start and, judging by these warnings, things could get even worse.

“The contract not just with the Sick Kids but the whole Little France has been an unmitigated disaster.

“This has unravelled on the SNP government’s watch, and it needs to start taking responsibility.

“Scottish Conservatives have called for full transparency around the project and called on the Health and Sport Committee to undertake an enquiry into the project.

“I have today also written to Audit Scotland to ask them to undertake a full audit of the Sick Kids project and the contracts and specifications commission on the hospital.

“Jeane Freeman and the SNP Scottish Government management of this situation looks totally incompetent with the Health Secretary being blown along the road by the latest scandals and revelations on the quality of the construction.

“SNP Ministers need do get a grip and show some leadership. Children and families depend on it and deserve better than this.”

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## [Michelle Stewart's family must be reassured her killer wasn't free](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Posts](#)
- [All News](#)
- Michelle Stewart's family must be reassured her killer wasn't free

2 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have called for the Justice Secretary to reassure the family of Michelle Stewart, a 17 year old girl brutally stabbed to death in 2008, that they will not run into her killer after he was reportedly seen in Prestwick without any prior warning.

John Wilson, who viciously killed Michelle Stewart only eleven years ago, was apparently seen by a member of the public in Prestwick on Tuesday despite the previous commitment of the Justice Secretary, Humza Yousaf, that he would not be allowed anywhere other than his work placement between HMP Greenock and Barlinnie.

The Stewart family have been campaigning to strengthen victims' rights ever since they were informed last year of the temporary release of Michelle's killer.

Lisa Stewart has again written to Humza Yousaf, the Justice Secretary, expressing her concern that she was not informed of this release and that she and her family are now deeply worried they may run into the unrepentant thug on their doorstep.

As Lisa writes in her letter, the family has “consistently expressed our concern about being put in a position of coming into contact with John Wilson when he is in the area and how this is unfair on us to have to be put in this position.”

Ms Stewart goes on to say that she is now having to change her plans as a result of this discovery and that she is now “restricted in my movements in my local area as once again there has been no prior warning given that he is in the area.

Lisa finishes her letter to the Cabinet Secretary saying that the family is;

“extremely disappointed given we have expressed our concerns to you directly and had your assurance that you would deal with the matter that we have once again been put in this position.”

**Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:**

“Having already gone through so much the Stewart family are, once again being traumatised because of failures in the SNP’s parole and early release system.

“It is deeply concerning that John Wilson seems to have been in Prestwick despite Humza Yousaf’s promise to the family that he would not be outside of his work placement.

“The Justice Secretary has promised the Stewart family that they do not face the prospect of bumping into their sister’s killer in their home town, but how can he be trusted now?

“Humza Yousaf must reassure the Stewart family that Mr Wilson was not in Prestwick and that they will receive full warning whenever he is out on temporary release.

“The SNP must now reform the parole and temporary release system to put victims at the heart of the justice system.”

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## [Shetland by-election decision ‘opens door’ for prisoner voting](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Posts](#)
- [All News](#)
- Shetland by-election decision ‘opens door’ for prisoner voting

1 Aug 2019



The SNP’s decision to allow prisoners to vote in the upcoming Shetland by-election “opens the door” for inmates to cast their ballot more widely in future, it has been warned.

Ministers confirmed today that they have legislated to allow prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or less to take part in the vote later this month.

And while hardly anyone will be affected by the change this time around, the Scottish Conservatives said it would set a precedent for future elections.

MSPs won't even get to debate the change, as Holyrood will be in recess until after the by-election, which follows the resignation of sitting MSP Tavish Scott.

**Scottish Conservative equalities spokeswoman Annie Wells said:**

"Although there will be little impact on this particular election, this ill-judged move opens the door for prisoner voting more generally.

"It sets the all-important precedent, and means the SNP will be enabling dangerous criminals to vote in future elections.

"That's not what the people of Scotland want to see, and not what prisoners deserve.

"The fact this is being done without any proper debate or consultation is particularly unacceptable.

"Victims of crime will be furious that people guilty of assault, domestic violence and serious drugs offences will be able to influence our political future."

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## [Huge rise in patients discharged from hospital with nowhere to go](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Posts](#)
- [All News](#)
- Huge rise in patients discharged from hospital with nowhere to go

1 Aug 2019



The number of homeless people discharged from hospital with nowhere to go has increased by nearly 300 per cent since the SNP came to power, it has emerged.

New figures have revealed that 582 people were told they were free to go from hospital last year, despite having "no fixed abode".

That compares to 148 in 2007, a statistic which has risen steadily in the years since.

The Scottish Conservatives said more needs to be done to ensure vulnerable people who have required hospital care then have some kind of safety net rather than returning to live on the streets.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said while he accepted hospitals couldn't be used as accommodation, a government initiative was required to make sure individuals who've just recovered from illness aren't put back out on the street.

He added that many of these people will be vulnerable drug users, and face immediate risks to their health from sleeping rough.

Last month it was confirmed that more people die from drug-related causes in Scotland than anywhere else in the developed world.

Today's data was released following a Parliamentary Question by Mr Briggs. In her response, health secretary Jeane Freeman pointed out some of those included in the statistics could be people with a "mobile lifestyle" such as travellers and those with multiple residences.

**Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:**

"Something is clearly going wrong in the system for there to be such an increase in people discharged from hospital straight back out onto the street.

"It's not like this mirrors a trend in overall homelessness – there's been a very specific change and we need to work out what that is.

"The SNP is in sole charge of health and housing and, on its watch, this figure has risen threefold.

"It now needs to explain why that is, and take some responsibility when it comes to addressing it.

"We know Scotland is now the drugs deaths capital of the developed world.

"Many of these individuals will be vulnerable drug users, and once released from hospital are in immediate danger of overdosing again.

"If we want to reduce the mortality numbers, solving this particular problem would be a good place to start.

"The Scottish Conservatives have been calling for some time on SNP ministers to develop new housing initiatives to make sure vulnerable individuals are supported into assisted living and local support services."