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The SNP's attitude to college education has been criticised in a comprehensive report about poverty in Scotland.

Poverty and inequality adviser Naomi Eisenstadt produced the document examining the causes and impact of deprivation north of the border.

It said the "social class gradient is deeply worrying" and life outcomes are too heavily based on the wealth and social class of someone's parents.

She also said the colleges had been over-exposed to funding cuts, adding:

"The overall picture suggests that the university sector has had greater protection from hard financial times than the further education and the college sector."

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly attacked the SNP's record on colleges.

Last month, it emerged the number of people studying at college in Scotland had fallen to a decade low, while the number of part-time students had dropped by 18 per cent.

Scottish Conservative equalities spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"Education is such a key route in getting people out of a cycle of poverty.

"Yet now we see that SNP policies on free tuition are actually hindering that for many.

"They have led to colleges getting squeezed, even though they are so vital in delivering people the skills and education they need to make a difference for them and their families.

"This is why the Scottish Government must face up to the reality of its universal free tuition, and realise the damage it is doing to those who need help the most.

"The report also makes it abundantly clear that the gap between rich and poor in Scotland remains far too wide.

“This is the cost of having an SNP government which has completely ignored the needs of those who are worst-off in pursuit of its own constitutional goals.

“It’s more apparent in Nicola Sturgeon’s constituency than anywhere else in Scotland just how desperate life can be in our deprived areas.

“These findings should be a wake-up call for a complacent Scottish Government.”

To see the full report, visit: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00522051.pdf>
