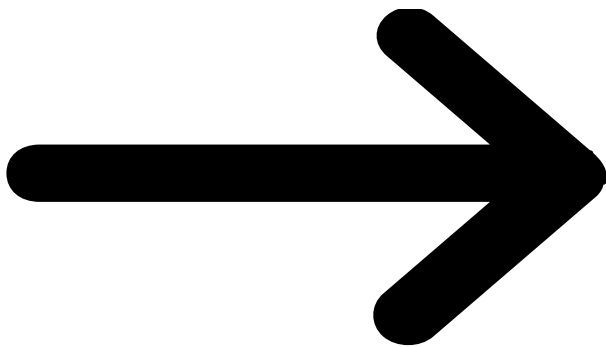


SNP must change tack on drugs

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The SNP must change tack on drugs policy to cut deaths and reduce addiction, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

At First Minister's Questions today, interim leader Jackson Carlaw pointed to examples of rehabilitation and support programmes which were short of either funding or NHS referrals.

He asked Nicola Sturgeon why her government was more enthusiastic about spending millions on methadone programmes and so-called "fix rooms" – where heroin addicts can access drugs on the NHS and inject them in a government-funded facility.

Nearly 1000 people died as a result of taking drugs last year in Scotland, one of the highest levels in the western world.

The statistics have got continually poorer over the last decade, in which time the SNP government has launched two drug strategies.

Today, Mr Carlaw cited a project in Barlinnie prison which is under threat, despite helping inmates with addiction change their lives, and a Lothians hospital which doesn't receive NHS patients, but can help addicts from other countries referred there.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"Over the last 10 years, the SNP has launched two major drugs strategies.

"But in that time, drugs deaths in Scotland have doubled and we're now on course to have the highest level in Europe.

"That shows the SNP government approach on this matter has been a failure.

"Its priorities seem to be spending millions on methadone and opening facilities to help heroin addicts take the drugs which have ruined their lives.

"Instead, resources should be focused on helping drug addicts recover, and

build their lives back up again.”