

News story: Minister encourages students to make their voices heard in upcoming Mayoral elections

The Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore, spoke to students from Long Road Sixth Form college today about how they can raise awareness of voter registration in the lead up to the election for the first mayor of Cambridge and Peterborough.

Students engaged in lively discussion with the minister on what democracy means to young people living in the East of England.

Chris Skidmore, Minister for the Constitution, said:

I was impressed by the level of debate and interest shown by Cambridge's college students today. This government is committed to a democracy that works for everyone and this means understanding the needs of young people, and other under-registered groups, on their own terms.

Over the coming months, people in Cambridge will be canvassed by different parties in the lead up to the election for the first mayor of Cambridge and Peterborough.

This is an exciting time in your local history and it's crucial you register to vote so you can have your say. Whoever you are, whatever your background, wherever you live – your voice matters.

Christine Sherwin, College Principle, at Long Road Sixth Form college said:

We are delighted that Chris has chosen to visit Long Road Sixth Form College to hear about our initiatives to ensure that all our students register to vote.

We take our role in promoting democracy with our students very seriously, and our efforts begin on the first day that they join the college, when we show them how to register to vote and encourage them to do so at the same time. Our students are also encouraged to become involved with the UK Youth Parliament, with the majority wanting the Youth Parliament to campaign on obtaining the right for 16 and 17 year olds to vote in all elections and referenda.

The Minister is visiting Cambridge as part of his Every Voice Matters Tour.

The tour will see him visit every part of the country to understand how to tackle barriers to voter registration. As part of his trip to Cambridge, the Minister also visited the Winter Comfort homeless drop in centre to speak to users about how they can register to vote.

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Nicola Sturgeon has been told to take responsibility for the nurse staffing crisis which has led to cancelled operations and empty theatres – instead of agitating for another referendum.

As health secretary, she cut student nursing numbers in two successive years, a decision she today said she stood by.

However, this week it has emerged hospitals have had to cancel procedures because of a lack of workers, and desperate health boards are forking out up to £1500 for agency nurse shifts.

And even after announcing a modest increase in student numbers for next year, the Royal College of Nursing said yesterday this still wouldn't meet demand, adding: "It is not enough to say that there are more nurses or that today's intake figures are the highest in years."

At First Minister's Questions, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said Ms Sturgeon should "confront the failings of 10 years" rather than obsessing about independence.

Ruth asked, were the First Minister to have her time again, would she still have cut those nursing numbers in 2010 and 2011.

Instead of admitting that error, she said: "We took decisions on the data available at the time."

This is despite both nursing bodies and opposition parties warning the cuts would come back to haunt the NHS.

Ruth also raised the example of north east patient Hugh Falconer, who was put on an urgent referral for treatment and told he would receive surgery within 12 weeks.

However, he's since been informed that the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary can't perform the surgery, and patients are no longer being referred to the waiting times back-up facility in Glasgow.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said: "We have a Scottish Government which puts its failing independence obsession before an NHS crisis of its own making.

"The First Minister asks what sort of country we want to be: I want a country run by a government that does the job we pay it to do – to look after Scotland's public services.

"Instead, we have one obsessed with a narrow nationalist project that has had its day.

"Six years ago, as health secretary, Nicola Sturgeon embarked on catastrophic cuts to student nursing places.

"She was warned by nursing leaders and opposition parties of the short-sightedness of this approach, and the impact it would have on patient care.

"Now, as predicted, patients are paying the price as routine operations are cancelled and treatment waiting times grow – all because of staff shortages.

"People want a country run by a Scottish Government that spends its every waking hour sorting out public services like the NHS – not obsessing about another referendum, or stoking up Brexit divisions.

"It's time for her to confront the failings of the last decade of this SNP government, and set out clear plans on how she intends to tackle them."

RCN Scotland said the SNP was "failing to futureproof" Scotland's nursing workforce:

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/student-nurse-intake-numbers-25-jan-2017>

Student nursing numbers have fallen under the SNP:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2014/12/student-nursing-numbers-hit-new-low/>

Earlier this week, the Scottish Conservatives revealed desperate health boards are paying up to £1500 per shift to agencies to cover staff shortages:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/01/agency-nurses-paid-more-than-1500-a-shift/>

It has been reported that operations are being cancelled as a result of staff shortages:

Tories should be aiming to have a mental health liaison team in every A&E as soon as possible – Barbara Keeley

Barbara Keeley MP, Labour's Shadow Cabinet Minister for Mental Health, commenting on a report by the National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Deaths on Mental Health in General Hospitals, said:

"It is well known that patients with severe mental health conditions are likely to develop physical health conditions earlier in life, yet this report shows that only 46 percent of patients with a mental health condition received good care in General Hospitals. It is unacceptable that patients with a mental health condition receive both poor physical and mental healthcare.

"The number of people attending A&E with psychiatric conditions has risen sharply since 2010 and many patients also have an underlying mental health condition. Yet, the Royal College of Psychiatrists has reported that only seven percent of A&E departments provide liaison psychiatry services 24/7.

"Tory Ministers should pay serious attention to reports like this. They should be aiming to have a mental health liaison team in every A&E as soon as possible. This could help reduce the level of readmissions to hospital highlighted in this report and improve the standards of care for patients with a mental health condition."

Ends

Snowfall disrupts Spring Festival travel in NE China

Snow disrupted the trips of Spring Festival travellers in northeast China on Thursday, causing multiple accidents and temporary closure of an airport and expressways.

Two people were killed and three injured in collisions which damaged more than 40 vehicles on a section of the expressway linking Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang, to Suihua City on Thursday, due to sudden snowfall, local government sources said.

At least 74 inbound and outbound flights were delayed at the Longjia international airport in Changchun, capital of Jilin, due to the snowy weather.

Thirty-two flights were forced to land in alternate airports. The airport started a red alert and closed for about three hours before reopening at 6 p.m. Thursday.

Most expressways in Jilin and 13 expressways in Liaoning imposed traffic control measures. Some flights were delayed at the Taoxian airport in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning.

Spring Festival, or the Lunar New Year, is the most important occasion for Chinese, who have a weeklong holiday period, placing a tremendous strain on railways, airports and expressways.

This year's Spring Festival falls on Saturday. About 3 billion trips are expected to be made during "chunyun," the travel rush that lasts this year from Jan. 13 to Feb. 21, the National Development and Reform Commission said.

[Dr. Mahesh sharma Inaugurates 'Bharat Parv' at Red Fort, Delhi](#)

Bharat Parv, a national festival showcasing the country's diverse culture, cuisines, handicrafts and catch glimpses of a progressive India was inaugurated by Dr. Mahesh Sharma