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- New stats show rate of Scots businesses far lower than UK average

8 Nov 2017



Scotland has a significantly lower rate of businesses per head of population than the rest of the UK, new figures have revealed today.

The official Businesses in Scotland 2017 report stated there were 393 enterprises for every 10,000 adults north of the border.

However, across the whole UK that figure is much higher at 499.

It means the number of businesses in existence is 27 per cent higher across Britain, prompting criticism of the SNP's track record in helping new enterprises.

Shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart has expressed concerns that Scotland will become a less attractive place to set up a new business if the SNP increases tax as threatened.

Numerous trade bodies have warned SNP ministers about increasing the tax burden on both businesses and workers, saying tax receipts could drop and the economy and public services in Scotland as a whole would suffer.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

"This is another indicator of how bad this SNP government has been for Scotland's economy.

"These latest figures show that, after a decade of the SNP being in charge of the economy, people are not being supported in setting up their own business.

"This will only get worse as the Scottish Government increases taxes across the board. This will not only discourage new start-ups, but risks driving away those businesses already in existence.

"These figures must act as a stark reminder to the nationalists about what their priorities ought to be.

"If they continually make life harder for businesses, large and small, everyone will pay the price."

[Swinney admits that Named person policy has significant problems](#)

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- Swinney admits that Named person policy has significant problems

8 Nov 2017



Education secretary John Swinney appeared before MSPs today, admitting the Scottish Government's keynote Named Person policy is facing major problems.

He stated that difficulties remain both in terms of parliamentary scrutiny and public trust in the policy.

His admission highlighted that independent legal experts continue to disagree with the Scottish Government's legal team.

He also stated that it was a mistake to publish the illustrative code of practice which was declared "not fit for purpose" by the Information Commissioner. This has created grave concerns for practitioners on the front line.

Concerns were also raised at today's Education Committee about the potential costs of the overall scheme.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said

"Mr Swinney was in front of the committee to pick up the poisoned chalice that has been left to him by his predecessors.

"He was extremely honest in his recognition of the problems now facing the information sharing part of the Named Person policy and the dilemmas facing the committee as its members struggle to scrutinise the bill effectively.

"It is very clear that even the supporters of the Named Person policy are in doubt about what is expected of them.

"It is also very clear that committee members continue to have reservations about whether or not the new bill and the code of practice – as yet unseen – can actually deliver effective policy when it comes to looking after our most vulnerable young people.

"That is a major concern and it is exactly the reason why the Named Person policy has lost public support and why it has run into parliamentary difficulties.

“Like so many other SNP schemes, the costs of this also risk spiralling out of control.

“Taxpayers are sick and tired of clearing up the mess left by botched and misguided SNP ideas.”

[SNP's multi-million GP recruitment scheme secures just 18 new doctors](#)

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- SNP's multi-million GP recruitment scheme secures just 18 new doctors

6 Nov 2017



An SNP initiative to hire more GPs has attracted just 18 new doctors in the two years since it was launched.

It has been revealed that the GP Recruitment and Retention Programme, unveiled in 2015, hasn't even delivered a single GP in certain areas of the country.

The information was published following a parliamentary question by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

Ministers announced funding of £2.5 million in the summer of 2015, with the aim of securing more family doctors in rural and deprived areas.

The scheme was then re-announced in March, with the promise of a further £5 million worth of investment.

However, now health secretary Shona Robison has confirmed the project has led to five new GPs for Glasgow, seven for Tayside, and a handful in other parts of the country.

It's the latest set of figures highlighting Scotland's GP crisis.

Thousands of doctors have left Scotland over the past three years, while a third of GP training places are unfilled.

Within the next few years, it is anticipated there will be a shortage of more than 800 GPs across the country.

In response, the Scottish Conservatives have launched the Save Our Surgeries campaign, which aims to fill the gaps left by the SNP in recent years and

secure a greater proportion of funding for general practice.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“It’s no wonder Scotland is in the grip of a general practice crisis when the SNP government fails so miserably to attract doctors to the job.

“This was launched with the promise of delivering GPs for rural and deprived areas.

“Instead, it’s led to a handful of new appointments which will barely have had any impact at all.

“Indeed, at this rate it would take this scheme almost a century to address the shortage of 856 GPs we’re expected to have.

“This is just another blatant failing of the SNP workforce planning, and the consequences on the ground are a population struggling to get a GP appointment, and those family doctors who are left feeling the strain.”

The full parliamentary answer from Shona Robison is below:

2 November 2017 (Holding Reply Issued 27 October 2017)

Index Heading: Health and Social Care

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservatives and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many GPs have been recruited through the GP Recruitment and Retention Fund, broken down by the NHS board that they have been allocated to.

S5W-11652

Shona Robison: The GP Recruitment and Retention fund was set up to explore with key stakeholders, the issues surrounding GP recruitment and retention. The programme has examined and taken forward proposals to increase the number of medical students choosing to go into GP training, as well as encouraging those wanting to work in rural and economically deprived areas. To date this has resulted in a number of initiatives directly recruiting GPs as part of their test of change and numbers are reflected in the following table by health board area:

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde -Deep End Pioneer Scheme	5
NHS Ayrshire and Arran	3
NHS Borders	2
NHS Lothian	1
NHS Tayside	7

The fund is also supporting a range of initiatives including the establishment of a Scottish Rural Medicine Collaborative involving ten NHS Boards. This initiative will bring together recruitment strategies and

support networks for GPs working in remote and rural areas; GPST bursaries for hard to fill places; Development of a new national GP recruitment website to be hosted and managed by NSS that will act as a one stop shop for GP recruitment across Scotland; and continued support for the NES Enhanced Returners scheme which supports GPs wishing to return to the profession. In Scotland over 90% of the 1082 GP Training places are now filled.

The scheme was announced in June 2015:

<https://news.gov.scot/news/primary-care-investment>

The Scottish Conservatives have launched a Save Our Surgeries campaign:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/10/up-to-3000-doctors-have-left-scotland-in-the-last-decade/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/10/third-of-scottish-gp-training-places-go-unfilled/>

[SNP Tax Facts](#)

6 Nov 2017



The SNP has outlined several options for income tax increases ahead of their next Budget.

What do they mean for you and your family? How many people will be affected? And are they really necessary?

Here's ten key facts you need to know.

[SNP Tax Facts](#)

[SNP should meet cost of 'freebies' from own pocket instead of hiking taxes](#)

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- SNP should meet cost of 'freebies' from own pocket instead of hiking taxes

5 Nov 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have called on the SNP to meet the cost of their policy priorities from their existing resources, rather than the pockets of taxpayers.

This week Nicola Sturgeon revealed proposals to increase taxes on those earning over £24,000 in order to pay for public services.

However independent research has shown that public spending in devolved areas is 25% higher in Scotland than in England.

And new analysis from the Scottish Conservatives has shown that the extra cash the Scottish Government gets to spend compared to south of the border is nearly four times as much as the combined cost of policies such as free prescriptions and free tuition.

The research shows that the SNP Government have £4.4billion more to spend on public services than England, yet these freebies cost just £1.2billion.

It has led to calls for the SNP to ensure that Scots get more 'bang from their buck', rather than raiding the pockets of basic rate taxpayers.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser MSP said:

"This analysis completely destroys the SNP's argument for hiking taxes.

"The Scottish Government already receives billions of pounds more to spend on public services than equivalent funders south of the Border.

"This should be more than enough to cover the cost of the SNP's freebies, such as free prescriptions and free tuition.

"Yet this SNP Government has been so inefficient in delivering services that we are spending far more than we need to.

"They need to ensure that Scots get far more bang from their buck when it comes to public spending, rather than raiding the pockets of taxpayers.

"There is no reason why hardworking Scots should have to pay for the SNP's total inability to deliver public services efficiently."