

Sturgeon challenged on why she ignored WHO testing guidance

8 Jun 2020



Nicola Sturgeon has been challenged on her claims she followed WHO guidance in full in the immediate response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Last week, the First Minister told Jackson Carlaw: "All the guidance that the Scottish Government has issued ... has been consistent with the guidance, the technical guidance that the WHO has set out."

However, the Scottish Conservative leader has now written to Ms Sturgeon identifying key parts of WHO guidance which haven't been followed by the SNP.

He cited two key aspects of WHO instructions on testing from March.

One states: "Isolate Covid-19 patients until they have two negative laboratory tests for Covid-19 taken at least 24 hours apart after the resident's symptoms have resolved."

The other implores governments to isolate those patients for two weeks if testing isn't available.

Neither of those points made their way into public health guidelines in Scotland, and the party has now urged the First Minister to correct the official record.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"Nicola Sturgeon was quite certain in responding to my concerns that she had followed WHO guidance to the letter.

"We now know that simply wasn't the case.

"She should correct the official record, and explain why this guidance from the WHO wasn't passed on in Scotland.

"Testing has been the biggest area of failure for this SNP government, and vulnerable patients and the staff who bravely look after them deserve answers."

Indefinite delay on child poverty report 'totally unacceptable'

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The Scottish Government has indefinitely delayed the second annual progress report on child poverty due to coronavirus.

The open-ended delay was announced by Aileen Campbell, the Communities Secretary, in response to a Government Initiated Question today.

The annual progress report on child poverty was introduced in the Child Poverty Act 2017 to monitor the Scottish Government's progress towards a range of targets designed to reduce child poverty.

In the first report last year, it was clear that significant progress in this area was still required from the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Conservatives have questioned the need for the delay and demanded a new publication date is announced immediately.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said:

"It is totally unacceptable that this important progress report has been indefinitely delayed.

"This assessment is an important benchmarking exercise to ensure that the Scottish Government is making progress towards the ambitious targets the Child Poverty Act set out.

"Given the current economic situation, monitoring the trajectory of child poverty could not be more important.

"We have serious concerns that vulnerable children are being left behind in this crisis as a result of the economic downturn, the lack of formal education and for some, worrying domestic situations.

"We already know that many vulnerable children are falling through the cracks in support and monitoring with only 1% of all children attending educational hubs, a worryingly low statistic.

"While some timescale alteration might have been understandable an indefinite delay is utterly unreasonable.

“The SNP Government must declare a new publication date for this report immediately, or it looks increasingly like the Scottish Government is simply burying bad news.”

Sturgeon should cut beleaguered Freeman loose

8 Jun 2020



Nicola Sturgeon must part company with beleaguered health secretary Jeane Freeman before even more mistakes are made in the running of Scotland's NHS.

The Scottish Conservatives said “enough is enough” in relation to Ms Freeman's position after more revelations emerged today.

And the party has now identified 10 further occasions where the health secretary has been lucky to keep her job as the health service north of the border continues to flounder.

It was reported today that frontline hospital staff are still not routinely tested for coronavirus, despite being months into the crisis, and that she doesn't know when that will change.

It also emerged that thousands of shielded patients have been wrongly sent a letter telling them it's safe to leave the house.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said a number of other blunders during the Covid-19 pandemic should have cost Ms Freeman her role.

That includes the cover-up of the now infamous Edinburgh Nike conference; directly contradicting the First Minister on scientific evidence relating to asymptomatic patients; and misleading the public about the number of elderly patients discharged from hospital to care homes despite not being routinely tested for the virus.

In addition, she failed for weeks to pass onto supermarkets details of vulnerable patients and threatened to name and shame health boards for her own failure to properly roll out coronavirus testing in care homes. And prior to the coronavirus pandemic, a number of failings had occurred on Ms Freeman's watch.

Opposition parties had already demanded her departure over infection deaths of children at the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow, some of which were reportedly covered up.

Two-thirds of Scots are served by health boards which have been placed by the SNP government in “special measures”.

The 12-week treatment time guarantee – despite being written into law by the SNP – has never been met, with cancer targets also well off-course.

And Ms Freeman was accused of lying by senior NHS Lothian chiefs over significant delays to the new Sick Kids hospital in Edinburgh.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Jeane Freeman was already on borrowed time before coronavirus hit.

“But as this crisis has unfolded, a number of issues have unfolded on her watch which were completely avoidable, and enough is enough.

“The testing structure under the SNP has been a disaster, to the point where care homes have been left in the lurch, and now she can’t even say when hospital staff will be routinely tested.

“The misplaced loyalty shown by the First Minister to her health secretary is having a negative impact on the NHS.

“A litany of problems had built up before, not least infection deaths of children at the SNP’s flagship hospital in Glasgow, and the continued unacceptable delays of the new Sick Kids in Edinburgh.

“These have been compounded by a dismal performance during the pandemic too.

“Nicola Sturgeon has to take the blinkers off and find someone who can actually get on top of these problems.”

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7 Jun 2020



The Health Secretary has admitted that hospital staff are 'not routinely' tested for Covid, and she doesn't know when they will be, despite a pledge to dramatically increase this regime weeks ago.

This compounds the SNP's failure to test care home staff recently highlighted by the Scottish Conservatives.

The Health Secretary made the admission on this morning's Sunday Politics Scotland.

Ms Freeman went on to admit that she also didn't know where patients who had acquired Covid in hospital had died.

The Scottish Conservatives have strongly criticised these admissions and stated the Health Secretary appears to have 'completely lost her grip' on the Covid crisis.

Jackson Carlaw, Scottish Conservative leader said:

"The Health Secretary appears to have completely lost her grip on the Covid crisis.

"The SNP government promised to dramatically increase hospital staff testing but still, weeks later, not only is nothing in place, Ms Freeman cannot tell us when it will be.

"Ms Freeman couldn't even give the public basic information about where patients who contracted Covid in hospital died.

"The SNP abandoned care homes to be ravaged by Covid, they appear to have done the same thing to hospitals also.

"Jeane Freeman's excuses keep getting thinner meanwhile thousands of tests are unused each day.

"Nicola Sturgeon says she takes responsibility for her government's approach to Covid and I agree – the First Minister is responsible for these catastrophic failures."

[Housing market must be able to reopen efficiently](#)

7 Jun 2020



The Scottish Conservatives have demanded that the SNP government enable the

housing market to reopen efficiently by allowing property professionals to visit homes.

The demand comes after the latest Scottish sales figures highlight the colossal impact of the lockdown on the property market.

In April this year Scotland recorded only 103 sales, down from 5765 in March this year and 6285 in January this year.

The size of the drop is no surprise given the housing market has been in lockdown, but surveyors and estate agents are worried that the confusing advice given to them for easing lockdown will mean that the much-needed reopening of the housing market will be undermined.

The Scottish Government's road map to lifting lockdown outlines that in phase 1 'preparing for the safe reopening of the housing market' can take place.

However, estate agents cannot open branches to the public during this period or visit people's homes for photography or to carry out market appraisals.

Surveyors are unable to return to work because they are not allowed to visit any properties. If surveyors cannot access properties then they cannot be valued or inspected prior to sale which will almost certainly delay the 'reopening of the market' in Phase 2.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has specifically stated that Phase 1 and Phase 2 are not clear enough in setting out exactly what estate agents and surveyors can and cannot do.

Therefore the Scottish Conservatives are calling for surveyors and estate agents to be allowed to visit properties for valuation which would be completely safe with the use of personal protective equipment.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow communities secretary said:

"The decimation of the housing market over the last two months is well known, but the figures are still utterly shocking.

"The property industry is a vital part of our economy and it is absolutely crucial, for all those waiting to move, for all those who work in property, for everyone in Scotland, that it is able to reopen and operate as efficiently as possible.

"In order to do this surveyors and estate agents need far more clarity for the next phases of lockdown and, importantly, property professionals must be able to view and inspect properties.

"There is no reason that property professionals cannot visit residential properties and follow social distancing guidelines, wear masks and gloves.

"At present the guidance is just not clear enough, which will only lead to a stuttering start when purpose and direction is needed.

“Unless the Scottish Government provides clear, sensible and relevant advice the property industry will not be able to open effectively, seriously hindering any economic recovery we hope to make.”