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- Frank's Law must be part of Sturgeon's autumn relaunch

25 Aug 2017



The introduction of Frank's Law must be a key part of the SNP's supposed "radical relaunch" ahead of the new Holyrood term.

Nationalists claimed earlier in the summer that they were ready to ditch their agitation on independence and start focusing on running the country.

Now shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has written to Nicola Sturgeon demanding she introduces legislation to ensure those with conditions like dementia, but happen to be under the age of 65, are given equal access to free personal care.

A majority of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament support the campaign, and Miles already has a member's bill on the subject.

In his letter, he said if the SNP was serious about creating a fairer society in Scotland, the enacting of Frank's Law should be a priority.

Scottish Parliament business resumes on September 5, with ministers under pressure to make more use of the powers available to them after a year of inactivity.

Frank's Law is named after former footballer Frank Kopel, who was diagnosed with dementia at the age of 59 and passed away in 2014.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Nicola Sturgeon always claims she wants to create a fairer society in Scotland.

"There would be no better way of demonstrating that than ending the unfair age discrimination currently faced by those with conditions like dementia, but happen to be under 65.

"The SNP has briefed the media about a radical relaunch, amid accusations of neglecting the day job for the past decade.

"If that's to happen, the introduction of Frank's Law should be one of the top priorities.

“There is a majority of MSPs at Holyrood in favour of this, and it’s time the First Minister recognised this.

“If the Scottish Government doesn’t move on this urgently, my member’s bill will carry on and seek to put an end to the current inequality that exists.”

The SNP said it was set for a radical relaunch this summer:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/07/snps-radical-relaunch-doesnt-include-a-single-new-policy-2/>

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has launched a member’s bill to introduce Frank’s Law:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/07/campaign-goes-live-on-franks-law/>

For more information on the campaign, visit:

<http://frankslaw.org/>

[Scottish Government ‘sluggish’ in making social care changes](#)

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- Scottish Government ‘sluggish’ in making social care changes

24 Aug 2017



SNP ministers have been “sluggish” in implementing changes to health and social care, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

A report by Audit Scotland stated while some progress had been made in implementing Self-directed Support, there was still more to be done.

The organisation added that the decade-long strategy was now in its seventh year, yet many service users were still to experience change.

Launched in 2010, the SDS initiative was designed to allow individuals and families, rather than social workers, to make the majority of decisions in relation to their care.

It was argued at the time that this would improve a number of areas, including dignity for service users and the ability to make informed choices.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the move to give people more choice over the health and social care support they need was welcome, but far too many were still awaiting the chance to take control.

Age Scotland added that people need more information relating to how they can access that personal support.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“The change to allow people to have more control over the support they received was welcome.

“However, the Scottish Government has been sluggish in ensuring this option is available to everyone.

“It would appear from the Audit Scotland findings that, having made this change in legislation, the SNP has taken its foot off the gas.

“As the auditors note, we are now seven years into a 10-year strategy, but it’s a strategy which – as it stands – is leaving far too many people behind.

“It’s clear the Scottish Government needs to do more to support these vulnerable people.”

[Scotland’s £1750 Union dividend revealed](#)

23 Aug 2017



People in Scotland benefited from a Union dividend of £1750 per head last year, according to new figures released today on Scotland’s finances.

This is an increase on the £1600 boost set out in last year’s Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) figures.

The annual GERS analysis reveals that, in 2016-17, public spending per person in Scotland was £13,175 – compared with £11,739 for the whole of the UK, a difference of £1437.

In addition, the average raised in taxes per head for the whole UK is £11,035, compared with £10,722 in Scotland, a gap of £312.

It means the Union dividend is the greatest since GERS records began in 1998.

The new figures also expose the scale of the SNP’s deception prior to the

2014 referendum, when it insisted a Yes vote would boost prosperity.

In fact – for the first year of what would have been independence Scotland ran a deficit of 8.3% – higher than any EU member state, and double that of Spain, the next highest.

The SNP claimed that, in 2016-17, Scotland would earn between £6.8 billion and £7.9 billion from oil taxes, helping to sustain spending on schools and hospitals.

The true figure, today's figures show, was £208 million.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Today's figures confirm the facts – Scotland is better off as part of the United Kingdom.

“All of us last year received a Union dividend of £1750 per head.

“The truth is that when times are tough – as they have been in Scotland over the last few years – we can rely on the weight of the whole UK to ensure schools, hospitals and public services remain decently funded.

“These figures also confirm just how wrong the SNP got it during the referendum campaign.

“In 2014, Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon looked Scottish families in the eye and insisted we'd be better off.

“In fact, in the first year of independence, Scotland would have been staring at the biggest deficit in Europe.

“The task ahead is clear.

“Rather than banging on and on about independence, Nicola Sturgeon must focus on using the huge powers at her disposal to try and build up Scotland's economy, so we close the gap between the amount we spend and the amount we earn.

“And she should have the humility to accept where she got it wrong.

“These figures confirm that her independence day – set for March 2016 – would have been our insolvency day.

“That is the bullet we dodged by voting No.”

To see the full document, visit:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/08/7201>

[Business rates system 'needs overhaul, not tinkering round the edges'](#)

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- Business rates system 'needs overhaul, not tinkering round the edges'

22 Aug 2017



A review into business rates merely tinkers round the edges when the overhaul of a broken system is required, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The Barclay Review, released today, sought to address concerns from businesses of all sizes across the country about the current regime.

It follows a revaluation earlier this year which sent various firms to the brink, with some facing astronomical increases in tax.

And while the report by Ken Barclay contains some welcome measures, shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said the changes don't go far enough for many.

He said the hospitality sector would require more assistance, and with the current 15 per cent rates rise cap running out in March, many could find themselves in the same difficult position in 2018, meaning the prospect of closures and job losses in the industry.

Concern was also expressed about proposals to levy rates on sports clubs and council arm's-length bodies, which hardly tie in with Scottish Government plans to get people more active.

Moves to levy rates on independent schools could also harm economies in certain parts of the country, and impact the quality of education at some of Scotland's best facilities.

However, the suggestion to bring the large business supplement in line with the rest of the UK has been welcomed, with the Scottish Conservatives having called on this move for some time.

Other proposals to encourage business growth and keep shops in town centres are also worthy inclusions, the party said.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"There are many welcome proposals within this report.

"But many firms will feel this is tinkering round the edges of a broken

system, rather than the fundamental overhaul that's required.

"The hospitality sector, whose safeguard of a 14.9 per cent cap runs out in March, will be worried that history will repeat itself next year.

"If that industry is hit with the kind of increases suggested last time around, it would almost certainly mean the closure of businesses and job losses.

"Proposals around independent schools and sports clubs will also have alarm bells ringing in those sectors.

"But there are also many welcome additions, and I hope the Scottish Government prioritises recommendations to bring the large business supplement in line with the rest of the UK, and the measures to boost town centres and business growth more generally."

To see the full report, visit:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00523643.pdf>

[Scotland should pursue volunteer tuition to close attainment gap](#)

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- Scotland should pursue volunteer tuition to close attainment gap

20 Aug 2017



The Scottish Government should back volunteer programmes which provide tuition for pupils from deprived backgrounds, the Scottish Conservatives have said today.

Elsewhere in the UK, government-funded schemes sign up volunteers from the local community to provide extra tuition for children from low-income families.

Tuition is accepted as one of the most effective ways to improve pupil attainment – but can cost anywhere between £20 to £40 an hour.

Charities such as Action Tutoring – backed by funding from the Cabinet Office – have recruited volunteers in London, Liverpool, Birmingham and

Sheffield to provide tuition free of charge.

With the Scottish Government having set up its own attainment fund, there is an opportunity for support to be given to projects in Scotland to see if it can help boost performance.

One such scheme – the Volunteer Tutors Organisation in Glasgow – recently issued a call for more support.

The plan comes with the Scottish Conservatives using pupils' return to school this week to set out a series of ideas that may boost attainment in Scottish education.

Scottish Conservative further education spokesman Oliver Mundell said:

“Extra tuition is recognised as one of the best ways to give students an extra leg up.

“But for too many children from low income families, they are simply priced out of the market.

“Across the UK, charities which provide volunteer tuition for disadvantaged children are doing fantastic work levelling out the playing field.

“All parties in Scotland want to reduce the attainment gap, and we believe the Scottish Government could look to see what help it can provide to do more.

“Rather than spend yet more public money on bureaucracy, the SNP government might consider giving support to charities which can ensure disadvantaged pupils get the tuition they need, but can't currently afford.”

There are projects up and running in England which have been part-funded by the Cabinet Office:

<http://actiontutoring.org.uk/>

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/centre-social-action-innovation-fund-young-people>

However, volunteer programmes in Scotland have recently warned they are struggling for funds.

<http://www.vto.btck.co.uk/>