

SNP must reveal details of Covid-19 council cash boost

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A full breakdown must be published of how much councils are receiving from the SNP government to help fight the impact of coronavirus, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Thanks to Barnett Consequentials, ministers here have around £155 million to pass onto local authorities as health and social care services struggle to cope.

However, care homes themselves have expressed concerns that the money isn't filtering through in all areas, and now the Scottish Conservatives have called for transparency.

Leader Jackson Carlaw said the public were keen to know exactly how relief money was being spent, and in which parts of the country.

Earlier this week, care home owner Robert Kilgour said only certain councils had so far passed the cash on, prompting questions about where the full £155 million had been allocated.

He said homes in Dumfries and Galloway and Fife had been given support, but his facilities in other parts of the country had not.

His demands echo calls from COSLA, who've also demanded action on the passing on of the £155 million from Westminster.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"There is increasing public appetite for full transparency when it comes to the allocation of funds.

"We know there is £155 million to be spent across Scotland by local authorities to help facilities like care homes battle this intense crisis.

"But the SNP government needs to go further than just a press announcement. It must publish in detail how this £155 million has been spent and where.

"People need to know how much extra their local council has been given.

"We're still waiting for the SNP to publish in detail how it has passed on money for economic support.

"Workers and residents in care homes won't accept similar delays for this fund."

More businesses slam SNP over emergency support

24 Apr 2020



Another Scottish business owner has attacked the SNP over a lack of support for small firms during the coronavirus pandemic.

Michael Lumsden, who runs spa business across the country, said there was growing disparity between what the SNP was providing to retailers and what was happening elsewhere in the UK.

The PURE Spa and Beauty director said he'd spoken to numerous businesses in England which had already received their full £25,000 grant to mitigate the impact of Covid-19.

He added that, because funds here were being directed through local authorities, it was taking longer for the support those who needed it most.

In a letter to MSPs, he said: *"Unfortunately the changes to the retail, leisure and hospitality grants implemented by the Scottish Government have made the administering of the £25K grants by councils unnecessarily slow. Our businesses cannot afford such unnecessary delays caused by bureaucracy."*

His intervention follows that of coffee chain owner Jon Sharp, who has spoken to scores of small businesses across the country.

He pointed to "loopholes" in the SNP's support which harmed businesses who don't qualify for the Small Business Bonus Scheme, and reduced financial help for those with more than one outlet.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Donald Cameron said:

"It is now beyond doubt that the SNP's package of support for small businesses falls well short for far too many.

"This is another hardworking business owner whose properties would fare far better if they were based south of the border.

"That's not an acceptable situation for the Scottish Government to create.

"We know this is a health crisis first and foremost, but the economic disaster is following closely behind.

"These firms need support right now so they can thrive once we come out the other side of this pandemic."

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24 Apr 2020



Housebuilders should be given the green light to return to work safely in Scotland, after it was reported construction south of the border will resume within 10 days.

Major firm Taylor Wimpey said it would return to building sites on May 4 in England and Wales with appropriate social distancing and other safety measures in force.

However, the company – which has sites in development across Scotland – said it did not expect to start up again here because it hadn't received permission from the Scottish Government.

The firm's share price rose by 11 per cent on the back of the announcement for England and Wales, suggesting a return to construction could help Scotland's economy begin a revival.

But it stated: *"This decision is based on current Government guidance and medical advice and, if this was to tighten further, we would conduct a further review. At this [stage](#) we do not expect to start work in Scotland, until a return to construction receives the Scottish Government's support."*

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"We can't have a situation where building sites are back up and running in the rest of the UK, but lie empty here.

"That would be an unfair blow to our economy, not to mention the people across Scotland who are waiting to move into these much-needed new homes.

"If construction firms can get back to work safely in England and Wales, then they should be able to do so here.

"We appreciate that public health and the protection of life are the biggest

priorities – but if housebuilders can do that without risking those things, it has to be looked at.

“We’ve always said we will support a divergent approach in Scotland if it can be shown that it’s of benefit for Scotland.

“That’s why the SNP government has to allow housebuilders back to work under new conditions, or explain very clearly and convincingly why they cannot.”

Council chief warns care staff under ‘unprecedented strain’

24 Apr 2020



A top council official in Scotland’s capital city has warned that care home staff are under “unprecedented strain” as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

It comes as residential facilities across the country continue to struggle to access personal protective equipment (PPE) weeks into the crisis.

Two homes in Edinburgh are the latest to speak out about supply concerns, as the death toll in Scottish care facilities is expected to overtake hospitals by next week.

And the Scottish Conservatives have also urged the SNP government to match a pledge to allow essential workers and their families to book a Covid-19 test online.

The service south of the border is now open to 10 million, but no such commitment has been made by SNP ministers.

Today’s *Edinburgh Evening News* report remarks by the chief officer of the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership, Judith Proctor.

She said in a memo: “*The increase in staff self-isolating or COVID-19 positive may place unprecedented strain on workforce numbers. Staff working in care homes, often supported by District Nurses, are skilled at delivering high quality palliative and end of life care. However, it is recognised that the trauma of multiple residents dying in a short period of time while staff are worried about their own and their family’s health puts an additional burden of distress on those delivering care.*”

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"It's increasingly clear that care homes are really bearing the brunt of this crisis, and haven't been given the same priority as hospitals.

"There are still residential facilities not getting access to the PPE they need, and that's not something the hardworking staff ought to be worrying about.

"There are also huge concerns over testing.

"The UK Government is now allowing millions to register for these tests, and that's something the Scottish Government should be looking at too.

"We can't have a situation where carers in Scotland are getting reduced protection, and reduced testing, than their counterparts elsewhere in the UK."

Care home with 9 deaths hits out at SNP over testing

17 Apr 2020



A care home which has lost nine residents to Covid-19 has criticised the Scottish Government over testing.

The Newark Care facility in Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire said neither its staff nor its residents had been tested, despite repeated requests to the SNP government.

Chief executive Jack Ryan has now written to First Minister Nicola Sturgeon outlining his concerns.

He said: "You stated that it is standard practice for testing of early cases to be carried out within care homes. You need to be aware that, despite having now lost 9 residents whose deaths have been reported as coronavirus related, there has been no testing at any point. All occurrences were reported to public health, East Renfrewshire HSPC and the Care Inspectorate. We have asked repeatedly for testing, from the first instance and for every case which developed in the days that followed."

He added that SNP claims about testing in care homes for symptomatic residents being standard practice were "misleading and inaccurate".

The Scottish Government is coming under increasing pressure over the testing of care home staff and residents, and their access to personal protective equipment.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“The evidence from this care home will not be isolated, and that is of grave concern.

“They are saying very clearly that, despite several residents dying from this cruel virus, no progress has been made on testing at all.

“Perhaps if staff and residents could have been tested at an earlier stage, some of these deaths could have been avoided.

“These are the types of concerns that should be shooting right to the top of Nicola Sturgeon’s priority list.

“Care home workers are very much on the frontline and deserve the very best access to protection and testing.”