

Social care pay rise welcome – now protect them with PPE and testing

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13 Apr 2020



The Scottish Government must follow up a pay rise for social care workers with a package of measures to ensure they are protected and have access to testing.

Health secretary Jeane Freeman confirmed the wage increase after striking a deal with local authorities across the country.

However, fears remain about provisions of personal protective equipment (PPE) for both care workers in the community and in nursing homes.

And staff, residents and families are concerned about testing after a spate of deaths in care facilities across the country.

Ms Freeman admitted yesterday there was “still work to do” in this area.

At the weekend, a leaked report stated provisions of PPE among health and social care workers in Scotland’s capital city was a “concern”.

It said “supply chains remain complicated”, which chimes with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon’s admission that her government’s performance on the delivery of PPE hadn’t been up to scratch.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“The pay rise for care workers is welcome and will boost morale at a very important time.

“But it must be backed up by supplying these vital workers with the PPE they need to keep them, and the people they care for, safe.

“It’s also crucial that staff and the vulnerable people being cared for have access to testing as this pandemic takes hold.

“We’re now several weeks into this crisis, but still the care industry is extremely concerned about these two areas.

“A pay rise does not cancel out these concerns.

“We need to remember that carers working in homes and in the community are very much on the frontline – their safety should be of the utmost importance.”

SNP must detail how it is spending £2.2bn of support

13 Apr 2020



The SNP must detail exactly how it is spending the £2.2 billion received from the UK Government to support businesses through the coronavirus crisis.

Both Nicola Sturgeon and finance secretary Kate Forbes have claimed their package of support is superior.

But so far no details have been released about where the cash is going.

Across Scotland, firms in retail, leisure and hospitality have hit out at SNP divergence which sees £25,000 emergency grants provided by business rather than by property.

They have warned this will consign companies with more than one premises to collapse, costing thousands of Scottish jobs in the process.

Now shadow finance secretary Donald Cameron has demanded the Scottish Government details exactly where the £2.2 billion is being directed north of the border.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Donald Cameron said:

“We keep hearing from senior SNP figures that its package of support for businesses is superior to the UK Government’s.

“But absolutely no evidence has been provided to back this up.

“It’s time for the SNP government to put its money where its mouth is.

“It must detail exactly how it is spending this considerable package of support from the UK Government, and which areas are actually going to benefit from this.

“So far, the only clarity we have is that firms in leisure, hospitality and retail with more than one property are being sold extremely short.”

SNP must publish care home Covid-19 figures

12 Apr 2020



The number of suspected coronavirus cases in care homes must be published as a matter of urgency, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It was reported this morning that around half of Scotland's care homes have been hit by Covid-19.

However, the Care Inspectorate could wait three months before making any official statistics public.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs has now written to his counterpart Jeane Freeman urging her to release the details as soon as possible.

There have been a number of Covid-19 deaths recorded in care homes across the country, with some facilities suffering several fatalities.

And workers at those homes have complained about a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"The SNP government will have these figures from the Care Inspectorate, so there's no excuse for them to be kept secret.

"Staff, residents and families are worried sick about the impact of coronavirus in care homes.

"That's why it's essential they are given all the necessary information.

"We know transparency doesn't come naturally to this SNP government, and we have long complained about its secrecy agenda.

"But now's the time for this habit to be dropped, and for these crucial statistics to be made public as quickly as possible."

Businesses across Scotland hit out at 'unfair' SNP crisis support

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12 Apr 2020



Small and medium-sized business across Scotland have hit out at the Scottish Government's "unfair" approach on emergency support grants.

Firms here operating in hospitality, leisure and retail are being offered a one-off £25,000 grant, even if they have numerous outlets.

But in England and Wales, businesses are given the cash for each property they own.

Now it has been warned that this divergent approach from the SNP could cost jobs and damage high streets as the country battles coronavirus.

The Scottish Conservatives have collected feedback from businesses in Angus, Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife and Perth and Kinross.

They range from takeaways and coffee shops to clothing stores and pubs.

Stuart Atkinson, who has three fast food business in Angus, said: "Given that my business will only receive a third of the support that is being offered elsewhere in the UK it is highly unlikely to survive. We were promised parity with the rest of the UK, but the Scottish Government's application of this support falls far, far short of that promise."

Karen Forret, managing director of nationwide clothing company Wilkies, added: "The idea behind a grant per property is to protect each of our high streets. One per business will simply not achieve this."

And a bar owner, who runs several establishments in Edinburgh, described the SNP's approach as "out of touch with business" and that it would be "impossible" for small businesses with more than one premises to stay afloat.

Coffee shop owner Jon Sharp has already expressed his disgust publicly, pointing out if his six outlets were in England, his business would be receiving several times the support being provided by the SNP in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"If the SNP doesn't want to listen to political opponents on this matter, it should at least pay attention to the businesses who are facing collapse.

"All over Scotland, firms of all shapes and sizes are sounding very urgent warnings to this SNP government.

"If it does not change this unfair approach, small firms will go to the wall and that will have a massive impact on jobs.

"We've been clear that we would support Nicola Sturgeon in her efforts to help businesses survive this crisis.

"But where her government takes a divergent approach, she has to be able to show why this will be of benefit.

"Instead, this disparity is only making things worse for the Scottish economy at the worst possible time."

Jackson: Call in the Army to help with PPE delivery

9 Apr 2020



The Scottish Government should consider calling on the armed forces to ensure vital protective equipment is delivered to key health and care workers.

Nicola Sturgeon has admitted that while there are adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) in Scotland, there have been issues transporting them to the right places.

It has been reported that key workers have had to go without the crucial gear because some distribution centres were closed, and there are fears that could be repeated over the Easter Weekend.

Today, at a virtual First Minister's Questions session, Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said the SNP government should consider asking the Army to help.

The UK armed forces have already contributed to efforts to cope with the coronavirus pandemic, with a logistics team based at St Andrew's House.

Mr Carlaw also challenged the First Minister on the disparity in emergency support grants small and medium businesses are receiving in Scotland compared to elsewhere in the UK.

Firms are angry that the UK Government is paying a £25,000 grant per property, where-as the Scottish Government are releasing only £25,000 per business, irrespective of the number of premises.

It has been warned that will cost jobs and drive many businesses to the wall, and flies in the face of earlier pledges from the SNP that support packages here would match those from Westminster.

However, Ms Sturgeon refused to say she would change tack.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"We have some of the best armed forces in the world who are standing ready to help.

"If the Scottish Government is having difficulty in getting vital PPE to those who need it most, they must call on the army to help.

"It would be a perfectly acceptable solution in this unprecedented crisis, and would help protect our very brave health workers in hospitals, care homes and community settings.

"It was disappointing to hear Nicola Sturgeon say she won't be addressing disparity in support grants for businesses.

"Many have warned that only paying by business, rather than by property, is deeply unfair and will almost certainly cost jobs.

"It's blatantly wrong that businesses in England and Wales could be receiving several times the level of support than those here, all because the SNP wants to follow a different path."