

# Thousands could avoid jail under SNP's soft touch justice

26 Jun 2019



Thousands of criminals could avoid jail if the SNP's presumption against sentences of up to 12 months is passed by the Scottish Parliament today.

It's expected that only the Scottish Conservatives will vote against the statutory instrument in the Scottish Parliament this afternoon with Scottish Labour, Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Green Party supporting the SNP's soft touch justice agenda.

The latest statistics show that last year 9,500 criminals were sentenced to less than 12 months in jail so, as a result of this vote, there will be a presumption they would remain at large, in the community.

Out of that 9,500, 100 were convicted of attempted murder or serious assault, 98 were sexual offenders and 329 were convicted of handling offensive weapons.

The community justice system is already overstretched – almost a third of community payback orders are not completed and two thirds of drug treatment and testing orders are not completed.

Victims' groups have repeatedly raised concerns about the increased risk to victims, particularly to victims of domestic abuse this presumption poses.

**In addition, Lord Turnbull**, a former chairman of the **Scottish Sentencing Council**, has stated that since an early guilty plea can lead to a reduction of a third on a sentence, a conviction which should attract an 18 month sentence, could be reduced by an early guilty plea to 12 months.

This would mean that, under the SNP's plan, domestic abusers, child pornographers and those who have attacked emergency workers and police officers could receive community sentences.

The Scottish Conservatives have condemned this policy as the latest SNP soft touch justice tactic which could seriously increase the risk to public safety, and deny justice to victims.

**Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:**

"This SNP soft-touch justice tactic could increase the risk to public safety, fail to punish criminals and deny victims justice.

"This SNP policy could let attempted murderers, sexual and violent offenders and those who've attacked emergency workers back out onto the street.

“Victims groups have already warned that this policy could increase risk to victims of domestic abuse.

“The community system is already over-stretched – increasing offender numbers so dramatically could stretch it to breaking point.

“The Scottish Conservatives are the only party completely opposed to this presumption and will continue to stand up for victims and the safety of the public.”

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## [Citizens' Assembly plans 'nothing but a talking shop for independence'](#)

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The SNP's plans for a Citizens' Assembly are “nothing but a talking shop for independence”, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Constitutional relations secretary Mike Russell today told MSPs of his proposal to set up the body as part of “Scotland's constitutional future”.

He said the body would become “an established way for mature democracies to engage with complex and contested issues on an inclusive, informed and respectful basis”.

However, he spent the majority of today's statement talking of how the assembly was needed to address the current questions on Brexit and independence.

And he even stated: “Let me assure the chamber that we will continue to consider whether the Referendums Bill should be accelerated and if required, we will return to that issue after the recess.”

In response, Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said while the party was generally in favour of such an assembly, the SNP's version of it was only designed to talk up separation.

As such, he said, all Scots who want to remain part of the UK should avoid it.

**Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:**

“There’s no question that a citizens’ assembly could have a role to play in Scotland.

“There are many areas that parliament struggles to govern over, and that’s something such a body may be able to help with.

“However, that kind of productive and useful citizens’ assembly is not what the SNP is proposing.

“This plan is nothing but a talking shop for independence.

“It’s another excuse to try and get people talking about the break-up of Britain – it’s a vanity project in the extreme from the SNP.

“That’s why the Scottish Conservatives will be having nothing to do with it, and anyone in Scotland who believes in the union should give it a wide berth.”

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## [SNP must take responsibility for Scotland’s homeless crisis](#)

26 Jun 2019



The SNP must take responsibility for a rise in homelessness after more than 12 years in charge of housing, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Figures published today showed a three per cent increase in people applying for temporary accommodation to their council.

It means there are now 36,465 people officially described as homeless in Scotland, a four-year high.

The number of children in temporary accommodation has also increased, from 6615 in 2018 to 6795 this year.

Scottish Conservative housing spokesman Graham Simpson said SNP ministers were ultimately accountable for the increase, and urged them to stop blaming other factors and governments.

He said the SNP government had to start considering all causes of homelessness and come up with a meaningful solution to help the tens of thousands of Scots who find themselves homeless each year.

## **Scottish Conservative housing spokesman Graham Simpson said:**

“The SNP has had full control of the housing brief for more than 12 years now, yet still we see homelessness figures going up.

“Everyone is tired of the nationalists’ blame game – it’s time they took responsibility and sorted this out.

“It’s completely unacceptable that the number of children living in temporary accommodation is on the rise.

“The levers of homelessness are extensive – they range from relationship breakdown and domestic violence to surging housing costs and a loss of employment.

“Ministers need to tackle the root causes that leave people without a roof over their heads.

“The time for the SNP shirking responsibility on this matter is over.”

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## **[Final opportunity for the Planning Bill to put people first](#)**

18 Jun 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have set out their top priorities that the Planning (Scotland) Bill must address prior to becoming law.

The final stage of the Planning (Scotland) Bill is due to dominate parliamentary timetable at Holyrood this week. MSPs at Holyrood will consider stage three amendments on the bill on all three parliamentary days.

The Scottish Conservatives have tabled amendments on three key areas, which will be voted on during the final stage of the bill.

The Scottish Conservative amendments will focus on:

- Making it easier for people to build their own homes
- Including mediation between community and developer rather than the equal right of appeal
- Devolving powers to local authorities to create short term let control areas so they can respond flexibly to the needs of different communities

The Scottish Conservatives will state that these key amendments will ensure that, from now on, Scottish planning laws work in the interests of people and

their communities.

**Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative housing and planning spokesman said:**

“All of these solutions will put people at the heart of the planning system.

“Many people would like to build their own homes but simply cannot find a plot.

“My amendments would facilitate that process and help more people build the life they’ve always dreamed of – the home they have always wanted.

“Too many people feel cut out of the planning system, which is really what has fuelled the demand for equal appeal rights.

“The Scottish Conservative solution of mediation will give communities the voice they need and ensure constructive resolution of controversial planning projects.

“The rapid growth in short-term lets has led to conflicts between the needs of communities with wider economic and tourism interests.

“The Scottish Conservative amendments in this section would give councils the powers to designate a problem area as a short term let control area.

“These amendments will give councils the flexibility that they need to respond appropriately to the concerns of their communities.”

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## [Methadone’s hospital toll revealed](#)

14 Jun 2019



Thousands of vulnerable drug addicts have ended up in hospital after overdosing on the very treatment prescribed by the NHS to help them, it has emerged.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed there have been 4479 hospital admissions caused by methadone since records began in the mid-1990s.

Last year alone 222 users were rushed to hospital after overdosing on the heroin-replacement substance.

The party’s public health spokeswoman, Annie Wells, said the official statistics proved the need to find better ways to treat heroin addicts.

She has long called for alternative treatments for users in Scotland, rather

than parking them on a substance like methadone which offers no real hope of recovery.

In contrast, the SNP government simply wants to make it even easier for addicts to take heroin, with the bid to set up NHS-run injecting facilities.

The figures on methadone-related hospital admissions, which were buried in the depths of ISD Scotland data files, show no improvement in reducing these figures since they were first gathered in 1996.

**Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:**

“Methadone is meant to help heroin addicts – but now we learn it has hospitalised thousands in recent years.

“It’s a disgrace that the system is so utterly dependent on parking vulnerable addicts on this dangerous substance when what they need is actual help.

“We need to remember that the vast majority of these people want to give up drugs altogether.

“But all they get is an SNP government which either feeds them methadone with no other alternative considered, or allows them to inject the ruinous heroin for free at a state-run facility.

“That’s unimaginative, and will only worsen Scotland’s already shocking drug problem.

“It’s time to see efforts going into changing the lives of heroin addicts for good, not making things worse for them.”