

Mental health staff numbers drop 'significantly'

26 Mar 2019



The number of mental health professionals working in Scotland's NHS has dropped significantly, despite SNP pledges to make the issue a priority.

Figures released today show there were 269 fewer workers in 2018 than the previous year.

The ISD Scotland report also revealed the 10,463 registered last year is significantly fewer than the 10,873 working in 2015.

In addition, bed numbers have reduced, with 3941 psychiatric beds in 2018, compared to 4015 the year before, and 4376 in 2014.

The research shows geographical differences in staff numbers, with NHS Tayside enjoying a far higher number of mental health staff per head of population than health boards in Lanarkshire and the Highlands.

Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"All political parties have agreed to make mental health a priority, yet the only ones with any power have completely failed to do so.

"How can the SNP government tell the people of Scotland that this issue is important to them, while overseeing such a significant reduction in staff?

"Not only have the numbers of workers dropped, but Scotland's population has increased and aged, while mental health problems are now increasingly common.

"This points yet again to disastrous workforce planning by the SNP government.

"That leaves vulnerable patients in the lurch, and increases the strain on the hard working staff who remain on these wards."

Hundreds waiting too long for drug and alcohol treatment

26 Mar 2019



Hundreds of Scots with drug and alcohol problems are waiting too long for treatment, new figures have revealed today.

There are currently 364 patients who have been waiting for more than six weeks for NHS help to tackle drug and alcohol addiction, around 14 per cent of all those seeking support.

That's an increase from 9 per cent, or 236 people, at the same point last year.

The statistics were published by ISD Scotland, and show some people are even being forced to wait more than 18 weeks for treatment to start.

Even prisoners are receiving a better service than patients on the outside, with almost all inmates getting help within three weeks.

A postcode lottery was also revealed; just 80 per cent of addicts in the Lothians are seen within three weeks, compared to almost everyone in places like Forth Valley and Lanarkshire.

The Scottish Conservatives said the war on drugs would never be won unless all patients seeking help received treatment urgently.

At First Minister's Questions last week, interim leader Jackson Carlaw highlighted examples of drug rehabilitation services being snubbed for cash while government money was poured into methadone programmes and centres allowing heroin addicts to inject drugs under NHS supervision.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"Scotland is getting worse at providing prompt help to patients with drug and alcohol problems.

"This should be an absolute priority for the SNP government to sort out.

"Someone battling these issues simply can't wait for several weeks to go by without getting some kind of support.

"It's time the SNP changed its approach here.

"Instead of creating centres to help people inject heroin, or pouring millions into methadone programmes, it should be focusing on getting people off drugs altogether.

"That's what the patients themselves want, and failure to provide help on time to those who seek it simply isn't good enough."

[Sturgeon's Brexit march attendance 'a scam'](#)

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- Sturgeon's Brexit march attendance 'a scam'

24 Mar 2019



Nicola Sturgeon's attendance at a Brexit protest march in London has been described as a "scam" to stoke up support for independence.

The First Minister spent the weekend addressing crowds opposed to leaving the EU, and even posed for "selfies" with Tony Blair's right-hand man Alastair Campbell.

And today she appeared in TV studios to say the case for independence had been made "very, very powerfully" as a result.

The Scottish Conservatives said that revealed the true motive of her visit, and that she had nothing of substance to offer the Brexit debate itself.

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

"Nicola Sturgeon's visit to London was a scam.

"She wasn't there because she cares about the UK leaving the EU, or to try and influence proceedings in coming days.

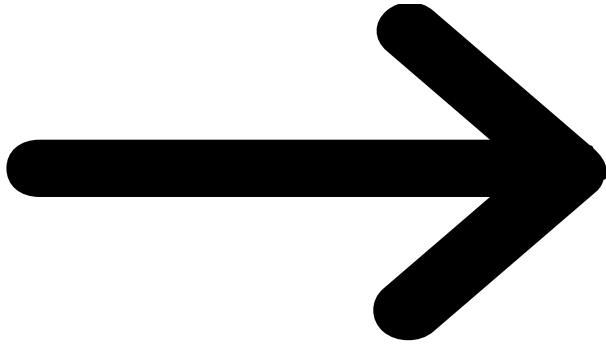
"She was there to agitate for a second independence referendum, and to set Scotland up for even more years of division.

"Independence is the only thing on her radar. Her obsession is stopping Scotland from getting on and doing the things that really matter to people.

"And just as the SNP's posturing on the Iraq war was opportunistic, so too is Nicola Sturgeon's opposition to Brexit – as her grinning selfie with Alastair Campbell proves."

[SNP must change tack on drugs](#)

21 Mar 2019



The SNP must change tack on drugs policy to cut deaths and reduce addiction, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

At First Minister's Questions today, interim leader Jackson Carlaw pointed to examples of rehabilitation and support programmes which were short of either funding or NHS referrals.

He asked Nicola Sturgeon why her government was more enthusiastic about spending millions on methadone programmes and so-called "fix rooms" – where heroin addicts can access drugs on the NHS and inject them in a government-funded facility.

Nearly 1000 people died as a result of taking drugs last year in Scotland, one of the highest levels in the western world.

The statistics have got continually poorer over the last decade, in which time the SNP government has launched two drug strategies.

Today, Mr Carlaw cited a project in Barlinnie prison which is under threat, despite helping inmates with addiction change their lives, and a Lothians hospital which doesn't receive NHS patients, but can help addicts from other countries referred there.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"Over the last 10 years, the SNP has launched two major drugs strategies.

"But in that time, drugs deaths in Scotland have doubled and we're now on course to have the highest level in Europe.

"That shows the SNP government approach on this matter has been a failure.

"Its priorities seem to be spending millions on methadone and opening facilities to help heroin addicts take the drugs which have ruined their lives.

"Instead, resources should be focused on helping drug addicts recover, and build their lives back up again."

SNP's 100k cancelled operations revealed

20 Mar 2019



Nearly 100,000 operations have been cancelled since the SNP government started formally recording the incidents three years ago.

Health secretary Jeane Freeman admitted that 97,322 elective procedures had to be rescheduled in that time – the equivalent of 89 a day.

The trend is also increasing, with a rise of 1279 cancelled operations over the past year.

The statistics were published following a parliamentary question from shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

In her answer, Ms Freeman said: “The decision to cancel an operation is never taken lightly and we continue to work closely with health boards to ensure cancellations are kept to a minimum.”

But the Scottish Conservatives said the “eye-watering” number of cancelled operations exposed the SNP’s incompetent running of the NHS in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“In an organisation the size of the NHS there will always be cancelled procedures, and some of these cancellations will have been unavoidable.

“But the fact nearly 100,000 operations have been scrapped since the SNP decided to record these statistics is eye-watering.

“This will have created massive heartache and inconvenience for thousands of patients and their families.

“It’s more proof that the SNP government simply isn’t up to the task of running Scotland’s NHS.

“Its workforce planning has been shambolic, and that failure has left staff and resources completely over-stretched.

“We need to hear urgently from SNP ministers about how they intend to address this crisis.”