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- Staff shortages jeopardising cancer plan, report warns

17 Jan 2019



Staff shortages in Scotland's NHS are jeopardising a £100 million plan to diagnose and treat cancer better, a damning report has found.

Holyrood's Cross Party Group on Cancer found huge problems with the Scottish Government's five-year strategy on the disease, now at the halfway point.

Among the concerns are the fact crucial tests are not taking place because of a lack of trained medics.

The report warns the strategy may not be fully implemented by the end of the current parliament in 2021.

And while elements of the plan were on course, the document stated, many of the vital points were well behind schedule because of low workforce numbers.

The Scottish Conservatives said this was the latest problem in the NHS created by the SNP's lack of workforce planning, which has resulted in record numbers of vacancies among nurses and consultants.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"While there has been welcome progress in the implementation of the cancer strategy in a number of areas, this report highlights that there is still significant action needed to ensure it is fully implemented by March 2021.

"The SNP government has been warned for years about the dire consequences of poor workforce planning and the CPG inquiry highlights this neglect.

"If ministers continue to ignore these warnings, cancer patients across Scotland will pay the price.

"The Scottish Government now needs to show some leadership in the delivery of cancer services across Scotland if the SNP is actually going to meet the targets it has set out in the cancer strategy ahead of 2021."

[Sturgeon 'grandstanding' in London to distract from Salmond scandal](#)

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16 Jan 2019



Nicola Sturgeon has been accused of “grandstanding” in London over Brexit, in the hope of drawing attention away from her civil war with predecessor Alex Salmond.

The First Minister arrived at Westminster this morning following last night’s Brexit vote in the House of Commons.

As well as again banging the drum for independence, she insisted her job was not on the line over the Salmond scandal, despite her now facing a specially set-up Holyrood probe and an investigation under the ministerial code.

And in a bizarre series of interviews where she stood against a backdrop of listless SNP MPs, she insisted Scotland’s interests would “only be protected with independence”.

Scottish Conservative chief whip Maurice Golden said:

“Once again, we see Nicola Sturgeon playing her usual political games today.

“Before people were even out of bed this morning, she was seeking to use last night’s vote to bang on about independence.

“Then she hot-footed it to Westminster, clearing calculating that grandstanding in Westminster might help distract people from her role in the Alex Salmond scandal.

“Finally, after accusing others of being delusional, she then insisted her job is not on the line over the affair. It is the First Minister who appears increasingly detached from reality.

“No wonder the SNP MPs ordered to line up behind her in Westminster looked so fed up.

“Nicola Sturgeon also needs to explain exactly why she needed to be in London today. Was she there as First Minister? If so, why should the taxpayer stump up for a SNP media stunt?

“The First Minister is losing the plot. More and more, people are asking why on earth we should put up with it?”

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15 Jan 2019



The Scottish Parliament is to launch an inquiry into the handling of, and fall-out from, sexual harassment complaints against former First Minister Alex Salmond.

MSPs on the Holyrood bureau today agreed that the probe would go ahead, following calls for an investigation by the Scottish Conservatives last week.

The parliamentary bureau will meet in coming weeks to discuss membership of the special committee which will be set up to carry out the inquiry, and its specific remit.

It is understood the committee will examine the meetings between Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond and the process used by the civil service in handling the complaints.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“I’m pleased that the parliamentary bureau has decided today to back the Scottish Conservative proposal for a Holyrood inquiry into this affair.

“An investigation has been botched, two complainants have been let down, and hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers’ money has been wasted.

“These are clearly matters for the Scottish Parliament to investigate, and the inquiry must be able to examine what went wrong and why this was allowed to happen.

“The setting up of the inquiry does not mean that legitimate questions cannot be asked – or answered – in the short term.

“For example, it is reported today that the First Minister’s chief of staff told a former colleague of Mr Salmond in March of last year that she ‘suspected’ an inquiry was on-going.

“Why was she speaking about this inquiry to third parties? Did she tell Nicola Sturgeon of her suspicions too? Or are we really to believe that Ms Sturgeon’s own chief of staff kept this from her?

“This scandal cannot be swept under the carpet. Parliament must, and now will, get the chance to probe this matter fully, learn lessons, and ensure it can never happen again.”

[Now teachers complain to Sturgeon about growing levels of violence in schools](#)

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- Now teachers complain to Sturgeon about growing levels of violence in schools

13 Jan 2019



Teachers have written to the Scottish Government describing a disturbing level of physical and verbal assaults, overwhelming workload and lack of teacher numbers in Scottish schools.

In October 2018, Nicola Sturgeon asked teachers to write to her to tell her about their experiences in their job.

120 Scottish teachers wrote to the Scottish Government and 60 of those letters have been released to the Scottish Conservatives following a freedom of information request.

The letters outline a disturbing catalogue of physical and verbal violence, particularly at the hands of special needs pupils who are in mainstream schools. One teacher writes, “The class teacher was hit. I was kicked and punched. My amazing support staff were subject to repeated kicks to the stomach and were bitten.”

The teachers also repeatedly raise the issue of increased and extreme workload. As another teacher writes, “The best teacher I have ever seen left last year due to paperwork and sheer unmanageable workload... Something must be done before there are no teachers left.”

The lack of teaching staff is also regularly cited as a significant issue; “We share a Headteacher but she is available less and less to manage our school as the workload at our cluster school is ever increasing due to cuts in support staff, social services, Primary mental health services, speech and language; the list goes on.”

Further issues covered in the letter include issues of secrecy, standards, curriculum and the failure of understanding by the SNP.

Some of the most concerning revelations refer to schools covering up their teacher shortages and teachers feeling unable to raise issues for fear of dismissal.

The Scottish Conservatives have said that these letters once again highlight the pressures teachers are under in our schools, including the increased levels of violence in the classroom.

Liz Smith MSP, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said;

“These letters speak for themselves.

“As well as all the other pressures currently being cited by teachers, the growing level of violence in our classrooms is a major worry. It is a completely unacceptable state of affairs that many teachers are forced to operate in this kind of environment.

“It is also interesting to note from the letters that teachers believe some of the problem is created by the well-intentioned, but nonetheless increasingly problematic policy which encourages local authorities to mainstream all pupils wherever possible.

“In far too many cases, pupils with particular support needs are in classes which cannot possibly provide them with the support they need.

“Likewise, there are growing worries that the education of other pupils in these classes is being affected and putting unfair, additional pressures on teachers.

“The latest statistics which show the decline in the numbers of specially trained ASN teachers is a serious problem which is impacting on the ability of schools to cope with special needs pupils. Little wonder then that frustrations grow and pupil behaviour deteriorates.

“John Swinney has acknowledged in Parliament that the mainstreaming policy should be reviewed. He has to do so urgently for exactly the reasons spelt out in these letters.”

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11 Jan 2019



Nicola Sturgeon must answer intensifying questions over her involvement in the Alex Salmond probe – specifically why she chose to meet the former First Minister just weeks before the case against him was made public.

No clarification has yet been given as to why this meeting took place, nor what was discussed.

Interim leader of the Scottish Conservatives Jackson Carlaw said today that the total lack of transparency surrounding the five contacts Ms Sturgeon had with her predecessor only demonstrated why a Holyrood inquiry was necessary.

And he added the “Saturday summit” between the two at Nicola Sturgeon’s home in Glasgow was of particular suspicion.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“As we have seen this week, Nicola Sturgeon’s case simply doesn’t stack up.

“She claims she told Mr Salmond in April last year that she would not get involved in this matter.

“If that was the case, why did she carry on taking phone calls and having meetings with him to discuss the matter?

“In particular, the First Minister needs to come clean on her bizarre decision to hold a Saturday summit with Mr Salmond at her home in July.

“This took place only weeks before the investigation was completed.

“She can’t claim she was ambushed by Mr Salmond. They’d already spoken three times at this point. So why did she hold this meeting?”

“What did Mr Salmond tell Ms Sturgeon about the investigation?

“What involvement did she, or any of her aides, have at this time?

“Why did the First Minister follow it up with a phone call four days later? Were discussions held about ways to bury this whole sordid affair and keep it under wraps?

“Failure to answer these questions make a Holyrood inquiry inevitable.

“The SNP cannot continue to sweep this matter under the carpet and patronise the public by claiming it’s all a matter for the SNP.

“It isn’t. Two Scottish Government employees have been let down, £500,000 of taxpayers’ money has been wasted, and the SNP administration’s competence is up for question.

“We need to know what has gone on – the First Minister must front up

immediately.”