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- Funding cut results in fewest ever attempts to quit smoking

4 Apr 2018



The number of smokers who tried to kick the habit last year fell to its lowest since quit-attempt records began, as the SNP government also cut funding into a scheme to help.

According to official figures there were 59,767 attempts to stop smoking last year, half the rate of five years ago.

At the same time, cash from the Scottish Government into smoking cessation and related initiatives reduced to its lowest since 2010.

The £134,000 spent in 2016/17 compares to nearly £600,000 the year before.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said while fewer people than ever now smoke in Scotland, ministers could not afford to get complacent about the issue.

Lung cancer is one of the most common causes of death in Scotland, claiming the lives of 4000 people last year.

And rates among people from deprived areas are significantly higher than in wealthier parts.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“Scotland, like many other countries, has taken great strides in reducing smoking in recent years.

“But these figures show complacency is beginning to creep in.

“It’s clear that a significant reduction in funding for smoking cessation has coincided with a big fall in smokers who try to quit.

“It’s essential we don’t allow that to slip – quitting smoking is a very difficult thing to do and, when people want to do so, it’s important the NHS is on hand to support them.

“I hope the SNP government addresses this issue next year and places more importance on smoking cessation than it is currently doing.

“It is important to see a renewed commitment from SNP ministers and I have written to ask for answers.”

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4 Apr 2018



New growth figures have confirmed Scotland's economy only performed half as well as the UK's over the whole of 2017.

According to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) statistics, growth for Scotland was 0.3 per cent in the final quarter of last year.

That means, for the whole year, the economy grew at 0.8 per cent, compared to the UK figure of 1.7 per cent.

Construction declined again by 2.6 per cent in the last three months, the eighth consecutive fall, while agriculture, forestry and fishing also reduced.

Shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said the SNP couldn't blame Brexit or Westminster for the poor performance, and only had itself to blame.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“This is confirmation that Scotland's economy under the SNP is growing at less than half the rate of the UK economy as a whole.

“That damning statistic is all on the SNP, a party which has been in charge of Scotland's economy for more than a decade.

“The impact of this is fewer jobs, less investment and lower tax receipts – all of which mean public services suffer.

“The SNP cannot blame anyone else for this.

“It's not because of Brexit and not because of Westminster – it's been caused by the actions of a short-sighted, high-tax and anti-business SNP government.”

Kids as young as 8 referred for housebreaking

3 Apr 2018



Hundreds of children, some as young as eight, have been reported for housebreaking in the last three years.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives have revealed the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) have received 517 referrals since 2014/15 for under 18s.

Of those, 186 occurred last year, a figure that has remained much the same for the past three years.

At least one eight-year-old in both East Ayrshire and the Highlands was referred for breaking into someone's house, as well as at least three children aged nine and seven aged 10.

The local authority area with the most children reported for housebreaking was Glasgow, with 79 reports over three years, followed by Edinburgh with 65 and North Lanarkshire with 42.

The statistics, gathered through Freedom of Information, revealed 15 was the most common age for a youngster to be referred for housebreaking to the SCRA, with 208 instances over three years.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said it was essential work was done with those referred to ensure housebreaking wasn't an offence that would be repeated in later life.

In September, it was revealed by Scottish Government statistics that housebreaking has a police clear-up rate of just 22.5 per cent.

Last month, the Scottish Government outlined its intentions to increase the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from eight to 12.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"Being broken into and robbed is one of the most upsetting things that can happen to a household.

"For victims, it's irrelevant what age the perpetrators are, it remains terrifying and can leave a lasting impact.

"It's alarming that hundreds of children have been referred for this crime

across Scotland in recent years, and the trend isn't improving.

"We need to get in and ensure these youngsters are put on the right path, because once people start out on this road to a career in crime, it's extremely hard to get them off it.

"When children who haven't even reached their teens are being referred for this, questions really do have to be asked about the parents too.

"Housebreaking generally is a problem across Scotland, with an extremely poor clear-up rate.

"Having hundreds of under 18s contribute to this only makes things worse."

[Ambulances forced to attend thousands of drink-related emergencies](#)

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2 Apr 2018



Ambulance crews were forced to attend more than 15,000 emergencies last year where alcohol was to blame, it has emerged.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives have revealed the number of incidents where drink was an "additional factor" increased from 2016.

In total, there have been 53,141 alcohol-related incidents in the past three years, the equivalent of nearly 50 a day.

The Freedom of Information response showed Glasgow had the highest number of instances in 2017, with a total of 3783.

That was followed by Edinburgh with 1674 and North Lanarkshire with 1279.

And the true number is likely to be even higher, as paramedics often don't specifically record if alcohol was one of the causes of the emergency.

The figures come as the Scottish Ambulance Service struggles to deal with the scale of demand across Scotland.

It was reported earlier this year that police and fire services have been called upon to help out with certain patients.

The Scottish Conservatives previously campaigned for some measures such as recovery centres to deal with people who'd consumed too much at weekends and during big events, to take the strain off ambulances and accident and emergency departments.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"It's clear people who've consumed too much alcohol are putting an immense and unnecessary strain on the ambulance service.

"No-one will be more annoyed than hardworking paramedics that this particular challenge stands in the way of helping patients who've fallen ill through no fault of their own.

"What's more worrying is the real scale of this will be so much higher, as these are only the incidents when the Scottish Ambulance Service has deemed it necessary to specifically record alcohol as a factor.

"The SNP government needs to ensure ambulance staff are sufficiently resourced to deal with current challenges, and regrettably that includes alcohol.

"We need to start discussing measures that could take the pressure off paramedics when dealing with this, including the possible role of temporary units in towns and cities to deal with those who've consumed too much, meaning they wouldn't need to go to A&E or trouble the ambulance service."

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29 Mar 2018



Nicola Sturgeon should stop blaming Brexit and start examining her own government's record when it comes to the economy, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

A report by the respected Fraser of Allander Institute this week blamed a cluttered landscape of strategies for choking Scotland's economic growth since the SNP came to power in 2007.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson reeled off the “myriad” of approaches the SNP had launched, none of which have sparked an economic turnaround.

Growth north of the border is a third of the whole UK, while the confidence of small businesses is also significantly lower.

However, at First Minister’s Questions today, Ms Sturgeon instead blamed Brexit – which won’t happen for another year – for the country’s past and present economic struggles.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Scotland is economically underperforming, and it has been since the SNP came to power more than a decade ago.

“Instead of blaming Brexit, Nicola Sturgeon needs to look closer to home.

“We’ve had 10 wasted years under this SNP government, and its record is nothing short of appalling.

“We have the lowest rate of business growth, the worst productivity in eight years, and the weakest projected growth of any country in the EU and OECD.

“The SNP can’t blame Brexit for any of that – it’s something that’s not even happened yet.

“It’s the decisions taken by the nationalists to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK and hammer businesses with unnecessary levies which are causing the real damage.”