

# Childcare availability worse for poorest families under SNP

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- Childcare availability worse for poorest families under SNP

15 Feb 2018



Figures compiled from the Care Inspectorate; Early Learning and Childcare Statistics, show that childcare availability for poorer families has decreased while for more affluent families it is increasing.

The SNP has committed to making childcare provisions available and equal to all.

However, these figures show that the recent expansion of childcare provision has primarily benefitted the most affluent, and has actually become slightly less available for the most deprived families.

These revelations come after damning Audit Scotland highlighted “significant risks” in the SNP’s policy to double early learning and childcare hours by 2020.

The findings demonstrate that in 2013 there were 54.4 childcare providers per 10,000 residents in Scotland for the most deprived families, which shrank to 53.6 by 2017.

This is in stark contrast to the least deprived families where, in 2013, the figure was 107.3.

And, last year, that figure rose to 110.3.

**Scottish Conservative childcare spokeswoman Michelle Ballantyne said:**

“All families need access to high quality, flexible and affordable childcare but these figures show if you are from a more deprived background, you are less likely to have access to funded childcare than if you come from a more affluent family.

“The SNP has committed to ensuring equality of access but as this report highlights, this is simply not true. In fact, the situation is actively getting worse.

“If trends continue in this way, poorer families will be increasingly disadvantaged, which will in turn have serious consequences for their abilities to manage family and working life.

“Despite all their big talk, the SNP has totally failed once again to help

the families most in need of support.

“Indeed, Maree Todd’s shambolic appearance on Good Morning Scotland highlights the SNP’s staggering complacency regarding the implementation of its childcare policy”.

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15 Feb 2018



A report for Audit Scotland into the SNP childcare and early learning policy has raised a series of concerns regarding its achievability and planning.

Councils are preparing to provide 1,140 funded hours for all 3 and 4-year-olds – and eligible two year-olds – to improve outcomes for children and to support parents to work, study or train.

This report suggests that the requisite increase in childcare staff and changes to premises will be difficult to achieve, detailed planning should have started earlier and there remains a considerable gap between what local councils and the Scottish Government expect the policy to cost.

The report also assessed the earlier 2014 expansion of funded early learning and childcare to 600 hours.

On this earlier expansion the report states that the government did not identify measures of success before committing almost £650m to the increase, making it difficult to assess whether it is delivering value for money.

**Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:**

“This Audit Scotland report is damning in term of exposing the failures of SNP policy on child care.

“It makes clear that there has been no attempt to evaluate different options in terms of delivering the additional hours of child care, or, just as importantly, the cost implications.

“Therefore, providers and councils have no idea of whether the current investment is delivering value for money and parents are left frustrated

because the current system is still not delivering the flexibility they need.

“This is a very serious wake-up call for the SNP. It has been all talk on the surface but, on the ground, there are fundamental issues at stake which are impacting on the effectiveness of children’s care.”

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## [Productivity in Scotland under SNP lowest since 2009](#)

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- Productivity in Scotland under SNP lowest since 2009

14 Feb 2018



Figures released today by the Scottish Government have shown that Scotland’s productivity (output per hour worked) has dropped to its lowest level in more than eight years.

The Labour Productivity Statistics for the July-September 2017 Quarter show that Scotland’s trend based productivity has dropped to its lowest level since the fourth quarter of 2009.

On an annual basis, productivity declined 3.2 per cent in the year to end-September 2017. In the last quarter alone, from July to September 2017, productivity is estimated to have dropped 0.7 per cent.

These figures demonstrate again that the SNP has failed to reach one of their main economic ‘Purpose Targets’.

The target, originally set in 2007, was to rank in the top quarter of OECD countries for productivity by 2017.

Scotland is currently approximately 16<sup>th</sup> among OECD countries regarding productivity, well below the top quarter.

**Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:**

“Improving productivity (output per hour worked), is the key driver to overall economic success in the long-term and has a direct impact on real wages and living standards.

“Productivity under the SNP has now declined to its lowest level in Scotland for eight years and is well-below levels in the rest of the UK.

‘‘The SNP has control over the enterprise and economic development powers that can positively change productivity in Scotland.

‘‘Instead of improving productivity however, the SNP has decided to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK and to increase the tax burden on business.

‘‘It is no wonder that Scotland’s economy under the SNP is facing the weakest period of growth for 60 years.’’

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## [Report reveals 20% cut to pothole funding](#)

12 Feb 2018



Funding to maintain Scotland’s roads has been cut by a fifth over the last seven years, a new report has revealed.

Cosla’s Local Government Benchmarking Framework report stated cash invested in roads maintenance to tackle issues like potholes had decreased heavily since 2010 in real terms.

It fell from £691 million in 2010/11, to £554 million last year.

In addition, spending on street cleaning is down 30 per cent, funding for culture and leisure services has reduced by 17 per cent, and in education, investment per school pupil has also dropped.

It was warned that the SNP’s reforms to education were jeopardising the drive to close Scotland’s attainment gap.

Overall, the report confirmed, council funding from the SNP government has plummeted by more than seven per cent in the last seven years.

**Scottish Conservative local government spokesman Alexander Stewart said:**

‘‘People right across the country are getting completely fed up with the state of roads.

‘‘From motorways to small residential streets, there are just too many potholes and too many problems.

‘‘We can now see the reason for this is the SNP’s decision to slash funding.

‘‘The SNP government now needs to explain why it has decided to do this, and

why it thinks motorists don't deserve to drive on good quality surfaces.

"Clearly council budgets have been cut to the bone by the SNP.

"That's nothing to do with Westminster, Brexit, or anything else the nationalists like to point their finger at.

"It's a choice made by this SNP government which hard-pressed local authorities are struggling to live with."

**On education spending, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:**

"The SNP claims that education is its top priority, most especially cutting the attainment gap.

"However, this report shows that there are concerns about how the SNP's reforms are being implemented and that this could be jeopardising that very goal.

"The SNP government asked to be judged on education. To date, there is little sign of progress."

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## [Campaign to create accredited 'dementia-friendly' tourism register for Scotland](#)

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- Campaign to create accredited 'dementia-friendly' tourism register for Scotland

11 Feb 2018



A register of dementia-friendly tourist destinations should be created to help sufferers and boost the sector, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

It would enable attractions north of the border to become accredited sites for people with conditions like Alzheimer's, as well as their carers.

And with an estimated 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK, the move could boost visitor numbers for a range of businesses.

Shadow culture secretary Rachael Hamilton came up with the plan after

submitting a written question to the Scottish Government, asking if it had a register of specific dementia-friendly locations.

No such list exists, ministers confirmed, and now Ms Hamilton has called for an accreditation scheme to be launched.

She said the Scottish Government could support businesses to embark on a range of measures to make their attraction more accessible for dementia sufferers.

That could include the creation of a quiet room for patients to take a "time out" during a visit; creating clearer working and signs for directions and advice; and changing the colour of doors to make them easier to locate.

Experts have also suggested hosting memory cafes and workshops, and organising bespoke tours for care homes as ways to help patients and carers.

Ms Hamilton added the Scottish Government could also support tourism firms who wanted to train staff in how to deal with challenges presented by visitors with dementia, and help in making necessary changes to any physical infrastructure.

**Scottish Conservative shadow culture secretary Rachael Hamilton said:**

"Creating a list of accredited dementia-friendly tourist sites would be of benefit to everyone.

"It would make a day out or short holiday for those living with the condition far more accessible and enjoyable, and of course would be of benefit to their carers.

"And it would immediately open the market to 1.7 million people in the UK, if you consider each visitor with dementia would likely have a carer accompanying too.

"The tourism industry in Scotland is more reliant on elderly customers than perhaps many people realise.

"The sector, like everyone else, has a role to play in improving the lives of these vulnerable patients, and this would be a good way to do it.

"It would mean trips to these attractions could become more feasible, and that in turn helps with a degree of independent living and keeping up levels of physical exercise.

"With the support of the Scottish Government and the input of charities, it would be relatively inexpensive for a tourist attraction to become officially dementia-friendly.

"I hope this is something all political parties in Scotland can get behind to make a positive difference for patients, carers and the tourism economy in general."