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- Matheson urged not to shun enforcement in drive to prevent crime

11 Jul 2017



The Scottish Government has been warned not to overlook the need for crime enforcement as it seeks to boost focus on prevention.

Justice secretary Michael Matheson published a report today outlining the need to prevent crime before it took place, particularly among young people.

And while this move was welcomed by the Scottish Conservatives, they said the SNP was still guilty of a “soft touch” approach and couldn’t afford to overlook the role of the police or prisons.

In the ‘Justice in Scotland: vision and priorities’ document, Mr Matheson bemoaned the fact more was spent on enforcement than prevention, adding: “A shift towards preventative spending is challenging but is likely to be more effective in the long term.”

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr pointed out that, only this week, a killer who’d been released after just three years had returned to the dock to plead guilty to two violent assaults committed since.

That is the latest in a string of “paltry” sentences dished out north of the border under the SNP.

There was also no mention in the report of whole-life sentences.

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly campaigned for their introduction for the most serious criminals, as happens elsewhere in the UK.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has said in the past it would be “right and proper” for the Sentencing Council to look at this, but there was no repeat of this in today’s report.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“Increasing focus on crime prevention is important, and I welcome that this report seeks to do that.

“That, alongside improved rehabilitation, is clearly the most effective way of reducing crime.

“However, this cannot come at the expense of enforcement and keeping communities safe.

“Michael Matheson has hinted he wants to shift away from enforcement, but that will only make life easier for the criminals who destroy lives in towns and cities across Scotland.

“The SNP remains too soft-touch on justice. Only this week we saw a convicted killer, who was released after a paltry three-year sentence, back in the dock after more violent assaults.

“And there’s no point in relying more heavily on community sentences if criminals never end up serving the payback orders or paying the fines.

“In addition, it’s disappointing there’s barely any mention of the victims of crime in this report, who already suspect their feelings and needs are overlooked in favour of the interests of criminals.

“This was also a golden opportunity for the Scottish Government to introduce whole-life sentences for the most dangerous and brutal criminals, as happens elsewhere in the UK.

“But the SNP shirked away from this again, and that’s a slap in the face to victims and their families.”

The full report is available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00522271.pdf>

The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly campaigned for whole life sentences:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/02/time-for-whole-life-sentences-to-bring-justice-for-murder-victims/>

Yesterday, a killer was back in court having committed two further violent attacks after serving just a three-year sentence:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-40560568>

SNP misses five out of six stroke targets

11 Jul 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have urged for a greater emphasis on improving the

quality of care for stroke patients across Scotland.

The calls follow a report released by ISD Scotland that revealed, despite slow improvements, much more needs to be done.

Stroke is the third most common death in Scotland and a leading cause of severe physical disability among Scottish adults – with over 9,000 stroke patients discharged from Scottish hospitals in 2016.

Revealed in the report were figures that showed only 45 per cent of patients are able to receive vital carotid endarterectomy treatment within two weeks of having a stroke.

All but one of the recorded statistics failed to reach the Scottish Stroke Care Standard requirements, some figures missing the requirement by over 40 per cent.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“Although this reports indicates a slow improvement in stroke care in Scotland, the fact that only one out of six standards is being met is a genuine cause for concern.

“It’s shocking only 55 per cent of stroke patients are receiving vital thrombolysis drugs within an hour of arriving in hospital, and only 45 per cent are receiving carotid endarterectomy to unblock arteries within two weeks.

“Fast treatment is the best way to ensure patients make as full a recovery as possible, and these delays could be causing long-term damage.

“In 2015, it was revealed that every 45 minutes someone in Scotland will have a stroke. The SNP owes it to patients to provide them with better support.”

[SNP’s ‘radical’ relaunch doesn’t include a single new policy](#)

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11 Jul 2017



Ideas set out by the SNP for a “radical” relaunch of government in the autumn don’t contain a single new idea, it has emerged.

It was reported this morning that, having been rattled by allegations of neglecting the “day job”, ministers are keen to set out fresh proposals once Holyrood returns after recess.

However, none of the ideas briefed to the media are new, with all of them having either been included in SNP manifestos or already set out formally as Scottish Government policy.

That includes handing communities more power in a shake-up of local government, a “new approach” to climate change, supporting manufacturers by boosting exports, and a project to encourage women back to work from maternity leave.

The Scottish Conservatives said the reheated proposals showed the SNP was a government all out of ideas, and paying the price for focusing on one single issue for so long.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

“These are ideas we’ve heard before from the SNP – there literally isn’t a new proposal in there.

“That’s not the radical relaunch bragged about by SNP insiders.

“It’s indicative of a tired government which has run out of inspiration and ideas.

“Indeed, the only other ‘new policies’ to be announced recently by the SNP have in fact been copied from the Scottish Conservative manifesto, including the announcement of a new enterprise agency for the south of Scotland and education reforms.

“And that’s no surprise – for years all ministers have cared about is breaking up Britain, and that’s come at the expense of areas like health, education and the economy.

“That’s why no-one will believe the nationalists when they say they’re now focused on the day job.

“Simply rehashing policies already announced will convince no-one that this is a party fit to govern Scotland.”

[Senior medics rake in £15k a head as NHS bonuses soar](#)

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- Senior medics rake in £15k a head as NHS bonuses soar

10 Jul 2017



Bonuses were paid to thousands of leading NHS consultants last year, averaging more than £15,000 per head, it has been revealed.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has shown £43 million was awarded in 2016/17 in the form of distinction awards and discretionary points.

They go to consultants and other senior medics deemed to have performed above expectation, and the figure has increased by nearly £6 million in the space of a year.

The statistics – obtained through Freedom of Information – show £43,038,750 was paid to 2858 recipients in the last 12 months.

The rise occurred despite SNP pledges to cut down on the bonus culture within Scotland's NHS at a time of financial restraint.

In 2010, when she was health secretary, Nicola Sturgeon pledged to bring the issue under control.

But these increasing figures show more than £100,000 in taxpayers' cash is being spent on these awards every day.

NHS Greater and Glasgow and Clyde paid out the most, handing senior medics more than £10 million last year.

Other big spenders included Lothian (£6 million), Tayside (£3.6 million), Grampian (£3.5 million) and Lanarkshire (£3.1 million).

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“There's nothing wrong with hardworking medical professionals being incentivised and rewarded for their work.

“And of course there's an acceptance that the NHS has to pay competitively if it wants the best staff.

“But senior medics like consultants are already very well remunerated, and many – including NHS workers further down the chain – will question the sheer scale of these payments.

“The NHS is extremely hard up for cash, and these are payments worth tens of millions of pounds.

“It's another example of the SNP government saying it's going to do something, then forgetting about it more or less immediately.

“Scotland's NHS deserves a government at Holyrood which pays more attention.”

Notes to editors:

To see the full figures visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Bonuses-FOI.xlsx>

Nicola Sturgeon pledged to crack down on the NHS bonus culture in 2010, and has been repeatedly criticised for failing to do so:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/msps-criticise-rise-in-nhs-consultant-bonuses-1-3739947>

[‘Control freak’ SNP tried to meddle in Audit Scotland report](#)

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- ‘Control freak’ SNP tried to meddle in Audit Scotland report

7 Jul 2017



The Scottish Government tried to persuade auditors to water down a damning report – which was supposed to be independent – into the country’s NHS, it has been reported.

Correspondence obtained by *The Times* revealed various officials contacted Audit Scotland on a number of occasions in relation to drafts of the critical NHS in Scotland 2016 report.

The officials are said to have objected to the “alarmist” tone, and urged the organisation to reword the report.

It is the latest in a series of incidents casting doubt on the SNP government’s transparency and accountability.

The nationalists have been under constant fire for their failure to process Freedom of Information requests properly, and earlier this week it emerged spin doctors were being brought in when FoI queries were submitted by the media.

And other public sector bodies, most notably Police Scotland, have been blasted for their culture of secrecy under the SNP.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“This is the behaviour of a control freak SNP government rattled by its own shortcomings.

“If the SNP was as proud of its performance on the NHS as it claims, it would have let this report tell its own story.

“Instead, in dozens of instances, ministers tried to meddle and have things changed.

“That is utterly unacceptable, and shows the Scottish Government is uninterested in being accountable and transparent.”