

Majority of Scots pupils denied the subject choice they want

30 Apr 2019



More than half of Scottish pupils can't take the subjects they want because of teacher shortages and school restrictions, a survey has revealed.

The nationwide study found that 56 per cent of youngsters were denied in their bids to study their chosen topics from National 4 level onwards.

The findings will be presented to MSPs at tomorrow's Scottish Parliament Education Committee as they probe the issue of narrowing subject choice in Scotland.

A range of education experts have already blasted the SNP's Curriculum for Excellence for restricting the choice of subjects young people can take at school.

Traditionally children at s4 level would sit eight subjects, but researchers say this is now commonly being reduced to just six.

And tomorrow the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) document will reveal the scale of the problem.

Modern Studies was the subject most often cited by respondents as the one they couldn't take, with the problem impacting Higher pupils more than any other.

Among other subjects frequently denied were French, History, Human Biology and Politics.

One survey respondent said: "I wasn't allowed to take Modern Studies and another social subject so I had to take art instead, which I hated."

Another added: "I was forced to take Spanish (a course I have no interest in) and miss a class I really enjoy."

And one child even said they were "unable to study all the subjects I wished to due to my school only offering six choices over one year instead of eight, leaving me worse off in my future".

One youngster warned: "I think it's going to really impact my future study as I might not be able to take the subjects I need to get to university."

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"No-one would expect every single pupil to be able to take every single subject they wanted.

“But this survey shows more than half of pupils are denied this opportunity.

“That speaks volumes about the narrowing choice of subjects being offered to Scotland’s pupils under this SNP government.

“Scotland used to be world-renowned for the breadth of education on offer in school.

“Now it’s more likely than not that our children will be denied the opportunities for learning they both need and deserve.”

[Sturgeon should back ‘The Sturgeon Test’ on Indyref2](#)

21 Apr 2019



The Scottish Conservatives are calling on Nicola Sturgeon to stand by her own test on holding a second independence referendum, prior to the SNP conference this week.

At her Holyrood manifesto launch in April 2016, Ms Sturgeon said that she would not bring forward a referendum before a majority of people in Scotland backed the case for independence.

The First Minister now claims she has the right to demand a referendum – yet a poll by the SNP supporting ‘Progress Scotland’ group earlier this month concluded that support for independence had fallen to below 40%.

Speaking at the launch of her manifesto in 2016, she said:

“If there is to be a second referendum, we first have to earn the right to propose it. Setting the date for a referendum before a majority of the Scottish people have been persuaded that independence – and therefore another referendum – is the best future for our country is the wrong way round.”

“This summer we will start new work to persuade a majority in Scotland of that case for independence. If we don’t succeed, we won’t have earned the right to propose another referendum.”

Jackson Carlaw, interim leader for the Scottish Conservatives said the First Minister should back “the Sturgeon Test” this week when she is expected to update Holyrood on her plans.

“At her own manifesto launch, Nicola Sturgeon made her view clear: if people didn’t back independence, she wouldn’t propose a referendum.

“For three years since, she’s tried to use Brexit to demonstrate support for independence and another referendum. Yet even the SNP’s own polls show she has comprehensively failed.

“Even by her own logic, the First Minister has not earned the right to hold another referendum. Let’s therefore hope that this week the First Minister stands by her own words, and doesn’t cave in to her activists ahead of SNP conference.

“Nicola Sturgeon should uphold the Sturgeon Test.

“Scotland doesn’t want yet more referendums – we want to move on and focus on the things that matter: improving our schools, making our streets safer and growing high quality jobs in Scotland.”

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16 Apr 2019



Social Security Scotland has accrued tens of thousands of pounds worth of bills on travel for staff in just six months.

A freedom of information request by the Scottish Conservatives revealed that over £70,000 has been spent in total, with £45,000 going towards rail travel, and the cost of hiring and leasing vehicles hitting nearly £14,000.

It comes after the Scottish Government announced earlier this year that Social Security Scotland would not be administering key social security benefits until 2024.

Scottish Conservative shadow social security secretary, Michelle Ballantyne said:

“This is an extraordinary large amount to spend on travel in such a short period of time.

“Social Security Scotland hasn’t even started administering any benefits yet they are spending tens of thousands of pounds on staff transport.

“With the SNP admitting that they won’t even have the capability to handle social security payments until 2024, you have to question why this amount is so high.

“It’s already embarrassing enough for the SNP that they have had to ask the DWP to continue delivering these powers on their behalf for another five years. “Now the organisation they set up for social security payments is racking up a huge bill despite not having even begun to carry out their main function.”

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16 Apr 2019



Nicola Sturgeon and her justice minister have received dozens of letters from Scots who were furious about the state of the Scottish justice system following the sentencing of Christopher Daniel.

Daniel sexually assaulted a six-year old girl but was granted an absolute discharge at Dumbarton Sheriff Court, meaning he would not be placed on the sex offenders register or have a criminal record.

This sentence was subsequently not appealed by the Crown Office as it did not meet the test of ‘undue leniency’, something that the Scottish Conservatives have asked to be reviewed.

A freedom of information request by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed the anger that this sentencing caused, with 91 letters being sent to Sturgeon’s government lambasting her for presiding over a justice system that discourages victims to come forward and provides them with little support when they do.

Some of the letters were sent by survivors of sexual violence, with others writing that “The system in Scotland does not protect these children it protects the abusers. This has to change,” and “this system offers more support to abusers as opposed to the defenceless victim.”

With Christopher Daniel undergoing dentistry training, there were also complaints from those in the profession who said it was ‘abhorrent’ that he would enter a line of work that would give him access to children and vulnerable adults.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr MSP said:

“Nicola Sturgeon can no longer be in any doubt as to the anger caused by her and her party’s soft-touch approach to justice.

“Her government has received dozens of letters from furious Scots who were rightly appalled by a convicted child abuser walking free from court with no punishment whatsoever.

“These letters rightly point out the dangerous message this sends, and that it once again reinforces the belief that our justice system does not do enough to support victims.

“There are also totally justified concerns about the access Christopher Daniel will have to vulnerable children and adults should he enter the dentistry profession.

“This case was absolutely devastating for the family of the victim, and is undoubtedly causing damage to the reputation of our justice system.

“That’s why we need to see the test for undue leniency reviewed so we can appeal against ludicrous sentences such as this if they are handed out in future.”

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16 Apr 2019



Police Scotland have racked up dozens of “notable incidents” in the past 18 months as it continues to battle funding pressure from the SNP government.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed 182 mistakes between August 2017 and December last year, all of which were deemed serious enough to have a “significant impact” on the reputation of the force.

Of the instances set out, 62 involved officers going to the wrong address, and 81 errors led to a delay in police attending a 999 or 101 call.

Among the most serious matters highlighted were:

- A member of the public threatening to self-harm was dismissed as a “false call”
- Failure to respond to a warning about a missing person, who was later found dead at home by the person making the call
- An assault victim told to go to an unmanned station to report the incident
- Officers failing to attend a domestic abuse call
- A faulty computer was continually used by police due to a lack of alternatives

Although scores of incidents occurred, the total figure accounts for just 0.006 per cent of calls handled by Police Scotland in that time period.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said the scale of the incidents showed the pressure the single force was under following the SNP’s refusal to fund crucial IT upgrades and the failure to support officers and staff during their poorly executed police merger.

The issue was previously raised by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson at First Minister’s Questions in 2017.

At that point, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said lessons would be learned.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“In an organisation the size of Police Scotland, there will always be incidents involving human error.

“But this research sets out scores of cases which, frankly, should never have happened.

“Brave police officers and staff are doing a great job to the best of their abilities, but all too often their needs and welfare have gone ignored.

“The SNP has flat out refused to fund the digital upgrades they promised, meaning officers and call-handlers are under huge strain.

“I’ve visited these control rooms and know exactly how challenging a job it is, and how well staff perform in spite of that. The least they deserve is some adequate support from SNP ministers.

"It's this sort of environment in which mistakes occur.

"The SNP has been in charge of the justice brief since 2007, and has to take responsibility for the scale of these errors, some of which have had devastating consequences."