

Sturgeon risks becoming 'Beeching of Scotland's NHS'

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- Sturgeon risks becoming 'Beeching of Scotland's NHS'

11 Aug 2018



Repeated cuts to health services across rural communities could lead to Nicola Sturgeon being remembered as the "Beeching of Scotland's NHS", it has been warned.

Speaking ahead of a visit to Orkney, shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said hospitals and other NHS facilities in non-urban areas were feeling the impact of SNP government cuts.

And he said if they continue, the impact on health services would be similar to that felt by local rail networks following reforms by infamous trains boss Dr Richard Beeching in the 1960s.

While in the Northern Isles, Mr Briggs will meet with local healthcare professionals to discuss issues affecting the system away from the Central Belt.

He pointed to cuts to services in places like West Lothian, Perthshire and the Highlands as evidence of the SNP's centralising attitude.

Just this week, it emerged dozens of children a month are transferred by ambulance from St John's Hospital in Livingston to the Sick Kids facility in the centre of Edinburgh following the closure last summer of the 24/7 admissions unit.

A campaign has recently launched to retain services in the Perth Royal Infirmary which the SNP wants to move to Dundee.

In Fife, patients were furious when it emerged services provided in places like Dunfermline, St Andrews and Glenrothes would be focused on Kirkcaldy.

And in the Highlands, health chiefs have already asked for a bail-out totalling nearly £20 million as it struggles to balance the books as it embarked on cutbacks like the closure of the maternity ward at Dr Gray's in Elgin.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Nicola Sturgeon has become to Scotland's NHS in rural communities what Beeching was to railways.

“The SNP government’s shocking record in office speaks for itself.

“It has mismanaged the workforce, finances and all the while has stripped away local services and centralised them elsewhere.

“There are examples of this all over Scotland, from Dumfries and Galloway and the Lothians, to Tayside and the Highlands.

“People in these areas have had enough of the constant SNP health cuts which have caused the loss of much-loved and much-needed services.

“If we are truly going to help build healthy, happy and sustainable rural and island communities, then we need a new approach.

“We need to rural-proof Scotland’s NHS to meet the changing and challenging nature of health and social care needs.

“That requires the SNP to ditch its Central Belt obsession and start to govern for the whole of Scotland.”

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9 Aug 2018



The Scottish Government has finally published its suicide prevention plan, over a month later than originally promised.

While the number of suicides in Scotland has reduced slightly last year, there was still a worrying rise in male casualties, from 517 to 522.

Scottish Conservative Mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells has previously backed calls for a new national body to be created to drive forward change, more suicide prevention training for key staff and for increased support for bereaved families.

The plan, published today, will implement a new National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) by September 2018 and includes mental health and suicide prevention training, developing reviews of all deaths by suicide, use of digital technology and public awareness campaigns.

Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

“Given the importance of this issue it is unacceptable that Scotland has been without a suicide prevention strategy for over a year-and-a-half.

“Suicide remains a main cause of avoidable death in Scotland, so this should be a priority area for any government, but clearly the SNP’s action doesn’t match its words.

“I very much welcome the emphasis on training, review and the public awareness campaign highlighted within the strategy.

“I would also like to welcome the new suicide prevention leadership group but I am sceptical that this group will be implemented by the September 2018, as promised.

“This suicide prevention strategy is already overdue. The SNP must now deliver it quickly and effectively with no further delays.”

[Urgent review needed to restore Scotland’s gold-standard reputation on subject choice](#)

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- Urgent review needed to restore Scotland’s gold-standard reputation on subject choice

9 Aug 2018



John Swinney must order an urgent review into the decline in subject choice in Scottish schools, the Scottish Conservatives have said today.

It comes as a study by Professor Jim Scott reveals that the number of S4 pupils studying and passing French has fallen by almost two thirds since Scotland’s new curriculum was introduced.

SQA figures released earlier this week confirm that there have been significant declines between 2017 and 2018 in the number of entries for modern languages across National 4, National 5 and Advanced Higher.

The figures also show that there have also been drops in the number of entries for the five main “STEM” subjects (biology, chemistry, computing,

maths and physics) in National 4 and Higher.

The falls in entries for these subjects are worse than the decline in overall entries between 2017 and 2018.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“Scottish schools were once known for the broad based education they provided to pupils.

“Under the SNP, that gold-standard reputation is being squandered.

“The decline in subject choice is one of the biggest concerns being raised by parents across Scotland and it’s something we’ve been raising with the SNP for months.

“John Swinney needs to get a grip and order an immediate review into what is going on.

“The real worry is that pupils from poorer areas are losing out the most.

“Nicola Sturgeon has made cutting the attainment gap her key priority – but how can children from poorer backgrounds progress if subjects in key areas aren’t on offer?

“The SNP’s response to the fall in standards this summer has been to cancel its own Education Bill designed to boost standards.

“That is despite the fact that John Swinney and Nicola Sturgeon repeatedly said the bill would be flagship legislation designed to raise standards.

“We cannot allow another generation of pupils to be let down by the SNP’s complacency.”

[500 sick kids diverted since children’s ward closure](#)

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8 Aug 2018



Around 500 sick youngsters have been diverted to a hospital 20 miles away since the controversial closure of a children’s ward, health bosses have

admitted.

NHS Lothian shut the paediatric facility at St John's Hospital in Livingston to out of hours and in-patients last summer, with no firm plans to reopen it.

Since then, the health board has stated, 500 children have been taken to the Sick Kids Hospital in the centre of Edinburgh.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the revelation proved the negative impact of the gradual downgrading of hospital services in West Lothian by the SNP government.

And he warned that patients in areas like Perth and Kinross and Renfrewshire would face similar issues with services being removed from those communities.

Papers presented to this month's NHS Lothian board meeting stated: "In the year since the temporary closure of the paediatric inpatient unit at St John's Hospital there had been approximately 500 admissions from there to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, averaging at 1.6 admissions per day."

Previous research by the Scottish Conservatives suggested the number of ambulance journeys from St John's to the Sick Kids trebled in the wake of the closure.

Earlier this year, the party called on the SNP to consider making St John's a paediatric teaching hospital in the hope of safeguarding its future and improving care across central Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"The situation facing sick children and their parents in West Lothian is completely unacceptable.

"This proves the decision to close the ward to 24/7 admissions, and downgrade the hospital more generally, has had a genuinely negative impact.

"The last thing worried parents should have to face in these situations is a 20-mile trip into the centre of Scotland's capital city when the care was previously provided on their doorstep.

"The SNP needs to wake up to the importance of local services.

"It's not just patients in West Lothian being affected. We could see similar trends occurring in Perth and Kinross and the west of Scotland too with planned reductions there.

"This is yet more evidence that the SNP government simply isn't up to the job of running Scotland's NHS."

Exam results 'expose SNP complacency' on education

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7 Aug 2018



SNP complacency on education has been “exposed” after a fall in exam pass rates across several key areas was revealed today.

The Scottish Conservatives said “major issues” at National 4 and 5 level proves the nationalist government “simply isn’t up to the job” of improving attainment across the country.

The statistics revealed National 4 attainment rate fell from 92.8 per cent last year to 91.1 per cent.

Those gaining A, B and Cs at National 5 dropped by more than two per cent to 77.4 per cent.

And A-C attainment rate at Higher level reduced slightly to 76.8 per cent from 2017.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has repeatedly said education is her top priority in government.

However, Scotland continues to struggle in comparison to youngsters in other countries, and today’s results confirmed a decrease across key subjects like English.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“Young people right across Scotland, and their teachers, should be congratulated on their efforts and achievements.

“And for those who didn’t get the results they wanted, it’s important they are pointed to the many other opportunities that lie ahead.

“But there’s no escaping the fact that, for a government which claims its priority is education, these are disappointing statistics.

“There has been no improvement in overall attainment across the board and these statistics confirm there are still major issues about the mix between National 4 and National 5 qualifications.

“That’s down to decisions this SNP government has taken, and exposes the

complacency it has shown towards education.

“We’ve warned for years that the SNP simply isn’t up to the job of pushing Scottish schools back up the international league tables. These statistics confirm that.”