

Breaches of home curfews on the rise

17 Jul 2018



The number of criminals breaching home detention curfews rose last year, with more than one in five offenders now being recalled to jail.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed, of the 1434 individuals granted the early releases from prison, 300 breached the order.

That compares to 241 in 2016/17 and 222 the year before that, the Scottish Prison Service figures revealed.

It follows reports today that 15 offenders who breached curfew orders, despite being recalled, have now been on the run for five years or more.

In one case, the Daily Mail reported, a criminal has been unlawfully at large for more than a decade.

The SNP government has been under increasing pressure on the monitoring of offenders after the jailing of killer James Wright, who murdered father-of-three Craig McClelland last year.

At the time of the attack, he'd been unlawfully at large for six months, having breached the terms of his release from prison for previous convictions.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“The fact an increasing number of criminals are breaching home detention curfews suggests these decisions are being taken too lightly.

“Now more than a fifth of these offenders breach the terms of their release, which suggests they should never have been set free in the first place.

“If sentences were of sufficient length, and the rehabilitation infrastructure vastly improved, the integration of these individuals would be far more successful.

“But what we see now is a soft-touch approach from the SNP government which is spreading right across the justice system.

“Not only are more criminals breaching these orders, but some who are can get away with this for years on end.

“That risks public safety, and is a gross insult to victims of crime who've already gone through enough.”

Ruth helps unveil new Google Garage

16 Jul 2018



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has emphasised the importance of digital skills education at the opening of a new facility in Edinburgh.

She helped unveil the new Google Digital Garage in the Capital today, saying such resources would help people of all ages improve their skills, and fill gaps in the technology jobs market across the country.

The facility will be accompanied by a digital skills training programme for people living in and around Glasgow as part of a major investment from the global firm.

It will enable people to access free coaching in creating a CV, learning more online skills, and providing information about internet security.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“Too many people still see technology as something beyond their reach – like learning a foreign language or mastering a musical instrument.

“But in truth, with support it can be picked up and improved upon very quickly.

“Finding people with the right technical skills is something employers say is their single biggest challenge, and one that is increasing.

“Yet, at the same time, we know one in five people in Scotland lack even the most basic digital skills.

“So we have a skills gap and people who’d love to work in the sector but don’t currently have the sufficient skills.

“That simply can’t go on. Tech and the digital economy is going to be vital if we are going to achieve economic growth in Scotland over the coming years.

“We all know the digital revolution is upon us and is only going to quicken up.

“It’s by working together – and exercising power responsibly – that we can make sure everyone benefits.”

[2500 Scottish addresses too unsafe for ambulance staff to enter](#)

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13 Jul 2018



Ambulance crews are prevented from entering more than 2500 addresses in Scotland amid fears for their safety, new figures have shown.

The Scottish Ambulance Service has marked 2557 homes as “red flagged” – where paramedics can only go in to respond to a 999 call with the presence of a police officer.

The statistics, which show a current snapshot in time rather than any historic trends, were obtained by the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information.

The party’s public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said the numbers exposed the challenges hardworking ambulance staff have to put up with on a daily basis.

She also called for tougher action from courts on those who assault or intimidate emergency workers.

The new figures can be broken down to cities and regions, but no further due to patient confidentiality.

There are currently 820 “red-flagged” addresses in and around Glasgow and 469 in the Lothians.

That’s followed by 216 in Lanarkshire’s ML postcode zone, and 191 in Ayrshire.

There are 169 addresses in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire deemed too dangerous for paramedics without the presence of police, and 150 in Fife.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

“It’s well-documented just how vital a role lifesaving ambulance workers play in Scotland.

“So it’s quite shocking to see there are more than 2500 addresses where they can’t safely go about their work.

“No paramedic should ever fear for their own wellbeing, especially when they

are dedicating their lives to helping others.

“We clearly need to do more to keep them safe, which means tough action from the courts when those assaulting, or threatening to assault, ambulance workers are caught.

“That’s the least we could do to ensure these brave and indispensable employees can go about their work safely and effectively.”

Notes to editors:

It shows the following red-flag addresses across Scotland, broken down by postcode area:

AB – 169

DD – 75

DG – 41

EH – 469

FK – 129

G – 820

HS – 7

IV – 74

KA – 191

KW – 7

KY – 150

ML – 216

PA – 132

PH – 41

TD – 33

ZE – 3

Total – 2557

SNP downgrading emergency department when it's 'never been busier'

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11 Jul 2018



The SNP has been accused of downgrading a key emergency department, despite the A&E ward recording its busiest month in eight years.

In May, the Perth Royal Infirmary received 2405 attendances to its casualty ward, as nationalist ministers were preparing to announce more services were to move to Dundee.

That's the highest number since May 2010, and an increase of more than 400 from the previous month alone.

In addition, activity at Ninewells Hospital's A&E also reached a record high in May, despite being set to take on more work from a stripped down PRI.

Its A&E ward had 4608 attendances, the most since these specific ISD Scotland records began in April 2009.

The Scottish Conservatives have said the SNP's decision to centralise more services at Ninewells has come at the worst possible time for both hospitals.

Earlier this week, the party revealed that bed numbers at the PRI had been gradually reduced over the years, evidence that the Scottish Government had been "chipping away" at the hospital.

That followed an announcement last week by new health secretary Jeane Freeman that all emergency surgery would be moved from the PRI to Dundee.

Scottish Conservative Mid Scotland and Fife MSP Liz Smith said:

"The SNP is downgrading the PRI at a time when it's hardly been busier.

"The fact May was the busiest month in eight years proves how valuable a facility it is.

"This is exactly why so many people in the local community are so angry about SNP plans to centralise services at Ninewells.

"They see this as a completely unacceptable move and one which will not be tolerated by staff or patients.

"The PRI has already lost maternity and paediatric services as well as emergency surgery.

"The latest downgrading is a step too far."

Scottish Conservative North East MSP Bill Bowman said:

"These figures show May was the busiest month for Ninewells' A&E ward for basically a decade.

"So that proves this is not the time for the SNP to be burdening it with even more work.

"By downgrading services in Perth, the SNP government seems to think Ninewells will be able to effortlessly pick up the slack.

"But as we have now learned, the hospital already has more than enough on its plate, and any increase in activity without proper funding and resources would risk patient safety and load yet more work onto hard-pressed staff."

Notes to editors:

Fears over the downgrade of the PRI were again reported today:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/perth-kinross/686019/anger-over-downgrading-perth-royal-infirmarys-ae-when-it-has-hardly-been-busier/>

Below are the number of attendances at the Perth Royal Infirmary's A&E by month, and year:

May 2018 – 2405

April 2018 – 2002

March 2018 – 1897

February 2018 – 1826

January 2018 – 1835

December 2017 – 2177

November 2017 – 1905

October 2017 – 2001

September 2017 – 2194

August 2017 – 2238

July 2017 – 2214

June 2017 – 2098

By year:

May 2017 – 2344

May 2016 – 2325

May 2015 – 2161

May 2014 – 2285

May 2013 – 2207

May 2012 – 2369

May 2011 – 2248

May 2010 – 2527

Below are the number of attendances at Ninewells' A&E by month and year:

May 2018 – 4608

April 2018 – 4113

March 2018 – 4042

February 2018 – 3649

January 2018 – 3860

December 2017 – 4351

November 2017 – 4157

October 2017 – 4157

September 2017 – 4287

August 2017 – 4359

July 2017 – 4092

June 2017 – 4080

By year:

May 2017 – 4393

May 2016 – 4377

May 2015 – 4010

May 2014 – 4210

May 2013 – 4103

May 2012 – 4169

May 2011 – 4500

May 2010 – 4512

Source:

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Emergency-Care/Publications/data-tables2017.asp?id=2202#2202>

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10 Jul 2018



The number of people being admitted to hospital with brain damage caused by alcohol has hit a new high, official figures have confirmed.

Nearly two people a day are seen by medics after excessive drinking impacted memory, learning and other cognitive skills.

The figures were released following a parliamentary question by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

They showed there were 661 cases last year, an increase of 25 from 2015/16.

When the SNP government came to power in 2007, there were 590 instances.

The statistics are the latest indication of Scotland's "complex and deep-rooted" battle with alcohol.

Alcohol is blamed for killing 22 Scots a week, with those in deprived areas considerably more likely to die than wealthier counterparts.

Today's figures show NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde had the most admissions last year, with 230 people requiring treatment for alcohol-related brain damage.

NHS Lothian recorded the second-highest rate with 99, followed by NHS Lanarkshire with 84.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"These are the latest figures which expose Scotland's complex and deep-rooted relationship with alcohol.

"It's worrying that these statistics continue to rise, and means more people

are having their lives badly impacted by drinking too much alcohol.

“Scotland already has one of the worst records in Europe for alcohol consumption, and despite increased awareness, the problem only seems to be getting worse.

“The SNP government has finally managed to introduce minimum pricing, but it’s clear far more will be required if we are to make any meaningful difference.

“The SNP has been in power since 2007, and in that time more people have been admitted to hospital with this problem.

“Health is an entirely devolved issue, and therefore we need to see ministers taking full responsibility for this worsening situation.

“The decision by SNP ministers to cut funding for alcohol and drug partnerships was wrong and has clearly impacted on the delivery of services to support people addicted to alcohol.

“The Scottish Conservatives want to see more emphasis put on recovery programmes, for pilot projects to be brought forward to investigate new and innovative treatments, and for more support for the family members and communities trying to help out vulnerable individuals with alcohol dependency.”

Notes to editors:

Below is a full copy of the parliamentary question from Miles Briggs, and the answer from Joe Fitzpatrick:

10 July 2018

Index Heading: Health and Social Care

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservatives and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many people in each NHS board area in each year since 2007 have been treated for alcohol-related brain damage, and what its position is on the trend.

S5W-17441

Joe FitzPatrick: Excessive drinking over a period of years may lead to a condition known as alcohol-related brain damage. This condition can cause problems with memory, learning and other cognitive skills. The Scottish Government provides funding to NHS Boards to work with Integration Authorities to provide services that meet the health needs of the local population, including people with alcohol-related brain injury. We expect alcohol services, mental health services and social services to work jointly and in a holistic way, so that people with alcohol-related brain injury receive the help they need to recover and any underlying mental health issues are addressed.

In financial year 2016-17 there were 661 Scottish residents who had at least one admission to a general acute hospital with a diagnosis of alcohol-related brain damage. See following table for breakdown of numbers at NHS Board level across financial years 2007-08 to 2016-17.

Table: Number of people with at least one hospital admission with diagnosis of alcohol-related brain

damage;

2007-08 – 2016-17

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Scotland	590	563	579	653	620	613	599	649	636	661
NHS Ayrshire & Arran	44	43	53	40	55	45	44	50	41	37
NHS Borders	6	10	8	*	7	11	*	*	6	*
NHS Dumfries & Galloway	13	8	8	13	8	7	10	14	9	10
NHS Fife	33	22	27	28	31	27	26	32	33	38
NHS Forth Valley	17	21	24	22	27	24	34	36	35	35
NHS Grampian	39	38	37	37	34	30	33	34	23	31
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	189	205	219	262	227	202	208	218	224	230
NHS Highland	61	37	42	38	33	54	44	36	48	41
NHS Lanarkshire	64	62	60	83	77	88	76	96	78	84
NHS Lothian	75	80	62	73	75	84	71	80	96	99
NHS Orkney	*	*	*	*	0	*	*	*	*	*
NHS Shetland	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	0
NHS Tayside	41	32	30	45	42	34	45	46	34	39
NHS Western Isles	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	*	7

Source: ISD Scotland

* Statistical Disclosure Control has been applied to protect patient confidentiality.