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10 Jul 2018



The SNP has failed to produce a plan for reducing the number of suicides in Scotland, despite promising it would be ready by the end of June.

It means Scotland has been without a suicide strategy for a year-and-a-half, with the previous plan running out in 2016.

Last month, then mental health minister Maureen Watt promised the vision would be published before July.

Now that the plan has failed to surface, the Scottish Conservatives are demanding urgent action on suicide prevention.

Mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells backs calls made by charities for a new national body to be created to drive forward change, and for increased support for bereaved families.

In addition, the party wants to see more suicide prevention training for key staff.

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

Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

“It’s not good enough that Scotland has been without a suicide prevention strategy for a year-and-a-half.

“The SNP government said it would publish this by the end of June, but still nothing has happened.

“This should be a priority area for any government, but clearly the SNP’s action doesn’t match its words.

“Suicide remains a major killer in Scotland, particularly among men, yet we have an SNP government that is being complacent.

“We cannot afford for this to drag on any longer.”

Notes to editors:

Scotland's previous suicide prevention strategy expired at the end of 2016:

<http://www.gov.scot/resource/0043/00439429.pdf>

It has not been replaced, despite SNP ministers saying it would be published by the end of June:

<https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/extra-3-million-in-funding-for-suicide-prevention-announced-by-scottish-government/>

For more information on the Mental Health Foundation and its campaigns, visit:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/preventing-suicide-scotland>

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9 Jul 2018



The number of beds at a key hospital being “deliberately downgraded” by the SNP has fallen by 15 per cent, new figures have shown.

The Scottish Conservatives said the drop in beds at the Perth Royal Infirmary since 2013 proves the Scottish Government has been “chipping away” at the crucial facility.

Last week, new health secretary Jeane Freeman confirmed all new emergency admissions would be diverted to Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, impacting hundreds of patients a month.

That confirmed fears from local campaigners in Perth that the hospital was being slowly downgraded in favour of a more centralised approach in a different city.

Now research by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed the gradual cut in beds at the hospital.

In 2013, there were an average of 251 beds available for patients at the hospital.

But by March this year, that had fallen to just 213.

Scottish Conservative Mid Scotland and Fife MSP Liz Smith said:

“Patients and staff in Perth have suspected the SNP has government has been chipping away at the PRI for years.

“These worrying figures on bed numbers prove that.

“The SNP has denied this deliberate downgrading of a key hospital, but the statistics and the latest announcements prove that as a deception.

“The PRI is a crucial facility serving one of the busiest areas of the country.

“As well as these bed cuts, the PRI has also lost maternity, paediatric, pathology and emergency surgery – all at a time when out of hours services are being cut and concerns remain over GP cover.

“The SNP government should be working to strengthen its role, not treating it like a second class facility.”

Notes to editors:

Below are the number of average available beds at the PRI by year:

March 2013 – 250.9

March 2014 – 240.5

March 2015 – 243.8

March 2016 – 232.6

March 2017 – 221.3

March 2018 – 212.7

Source:

<https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Hospital-Care/Publications/2018-06-26/Acute-Hospital-Publication/data-explorer/>

The Scottish Government announced the downgrade of the PRI's emergency department last week:

<https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/perth-kinross/684102/campaign-launches-against-downgrading-of-perth-ae/>

[Scottish Conservatives call for review](#)

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- Scottish Conservatives call for review of ambulance provision

1 Jul 2018



Scottish Conservatives have called on new Health Secretary Jeane Freeman to undertake a review into ambulance provision across Scotland.

The call comes following concerns expressed over emergency 999 incidents being responded to by minibus Patient Transport Services and warnings that the Scottish Ambulance Service needs an estimated 600 more paramedics.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs MSP said:

“It is concerning that we have seen such an increase in the Scottish Patient Transport Service minibuses being sent so frequently to respond to emergency 999 incidents.

“This clearly demonstrates the failure of SNP Ministers to provide and resources needed by the patient transport service and the Scottish Ambulance Service to meet the needs of patients traveling to hospital appointments or return home or to their place of care

“Scottish Conservatives want to see a review of patient transport services across Scotland as it is increasingly clear that demand for patient transport services in Scotland is outstripping supply, and this is just another example of the SNP Government failing to deliver an NHS plan for the future.”

On the predicted 600 paramedics needed:

“It is now abundantly clear for all to see the SNP mismanagement of workforce planning for our Scottish NHS has been a total failure.

“There’s no question the Scottish Ambulance Service is under immense strain, and short of workers in key areas.

“There are also things the SNP government could be doing alongside recruiting more staff, like ensuring the unacceptably high sickness rate comes down.”

Ruth calls for root and branch review of sentencing and release

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28 Jun 2018



Ruth Davidson has today repeated her call for a root and branch review of sentencing and release in Scotland, after she raised the case of Michelle Stewart during First Minister's Questions today.

Michelle, 17, was murdered in cold blood in 2009. At the trial of her killer, John Wilson, the judge said that he should serve a minimum of 12 years behind bars.

Michelle's family were told last week – nine years on – that Wilson was now up for temporary release, which would allow him unescorted access to the community for periods of up to 8 days at a time.

The family say they feel let down by the justice system given the promises that were made at the time of sentencing.

The Scottish Conservatives are now calling on the new Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf to order a full review of sentencing, parole and home release policy.

In particular, the party wants to:

- introduce greater transparency and honesty around sentencing, so victims and their families are given clearer information at the time a trial takes place.
- reform Parole Board rules so victims can have a say, in person, on decisions as they are made.
- toughen up the rules on home release and parole, so that breach of licence conditions is deemed an automatic criminal offence

Speaking after First Minister's Questions, Ruth said:

"Michelle's family have had to experience the worst thing anyone can endure – the death of a daughter and sister.

"The least they should expect is justice for Michelle. Instead, they have been left feeling utterly betrayed by the justice system.

"When families are told by a judge that a murderer is given a life sentence with a minimum of 12 years behind bars, that's what they expect. They don't expect to receive a letter telling them the killer might be wandering the

streets in their village, unescorted, before that term has ended.

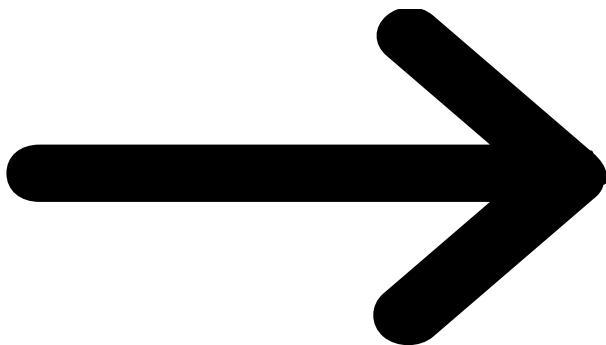
“We can’t carry on like this. The justice system needs to be overhauled with more honesty and transparency around sentencing. Victims and their families should have a louder voice in decisions on release. And criminals should know that if they breach their conditions of licence, they will be punished for that.

“The system is loaded against victims and their families. We have a new Justice Secretary in place. He must make this his first priority and act.”

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28 Jun 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have highlighted 16 examples of dither and delay from the SNP Government over the last parliamentary year – saying it proves Nicola Sturgeon’s government has “taken its eye off the ball”.

It comes after Education Secretary John Swinney shelved his flagship Education Bill earlier this week in a humiliating u-turn.

However, that embarrassment was only the tip of the iceberg for a government which has delayed welfare devolution, delayed their misconceived plan to merge British Transport Police and Police Scotland, and missed a host of key economic targets.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“The SNP’s end of term report mark is pretty dismal, a D – they have done little but dither, delay and duck.

“Whether it is their dumped flagship Education Bill, dithering over welfare devolution, or ducking the hard choices on the economy, Nicola Sturgeon has consistently demonstrated that the SNP has taken its eye off the ball.

“Nicola Sturgeon has shown once again that she is determined to break her biggest promise of all: to respect the result of the independence referendum and get on with the day job.

“She has stridently made it plain over the last 12 months that her government’s first priority is independence and independence only; it really does ‘transcend everything’.

“Sacking a handful of underperforming ministers won’t change the losing hand that Scotland is being dealt by this SNP Government. Increasingly, more and more people are concluding that it is only Ruth Davidson and the Scottish Conservatives who have a plan to get on and fix schools, the NHS and the economy.”