

Care homes being failed 'all over again'

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The SNP government is failing care homes “all over again” on the issue of testing, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Two weeks ago, health secretary Jeane Freeman pledged that all care home staff would be routinely tested for coronavirus.

However, latest testing figures have suggested that drive is falling well short, and at First Minister’s Questions today Nicola Sturgeon was unable to provide a statistical update.

One major provider – Renaissance Care – said barely half of its staff had been tested for Covid-19, despite the promise.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw challenged Ms Sturgeon on the issue today, and pointed out that 7000 tests a day would be needed to regularly test care home staff.

But even including all testing, some days have recorded half that number, meaning the target is well off-course.

And the party has today published a detailed account of just how severe SNP failings on testing have been.

‘Testing and the coronavirus: the record in Scotland’ analyses how major shortcomings have occurred in the SNP’s approach on testing from the outset.

It also reveals how Scotland has one of the poorest testing records not just in the UK, but also in comparison to countries across the world.

The paper was released on the day it was confirmed care homes have officially overtaken hospitals as the main place of death for Covid-19.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Lessons about coronavirus testing in care homes should have been learned weeks ago.

“But instead, the SNP is failing care homes, their staff and their residents all over again.

“It has now been a fortnight since the SNP government said all staff would be routinely tested for Covid-19.

“However, it’s clear from testing figures that this drive has fallen woefully

short. The fact the First Minister is so reluctant to provide statistics on this shows that she knows it.

“It would take around 7000 tests a day to ensure all care home staff were covered – but the SNP can’t even get close to that figure on the whole, let alone just for these workers.

“The World Health Organisation urged governments across the world to ‘test, test, test’.

“The SNP’s approach has been dither, delay and distract.

“The document published by the Scottish Conservatives today reveals the scale of these failings, and shows they have occurred over several weeks and are being repeated.

“Nicola Sturgeon said she would take full responsibility for her government’s approach to tackling coronavirus.

“As this shameful dossier tells us, the mistakes and shortcomings for Scotland have been considerable.”