

Doctors slam SNP over cuts to alcohol and drug funding

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A huge reduction in funding for drug and alcohol support by the Scottish Government has been criticised by doctors.

In a submission to Holyrood's health committee, the British Medical Association said the 22 per cent cut to alcohol and drug partnerships (ADPs) in last year's budget was a "false economy".

It criticised ministers for not restoring the funding in the 2017/18 budget, adding the move "will only increase pressures on the health service and general practice in particular".

BMA Scotland also told MSPs: "It is hard to see how this decision is compatible with the Scottish Government's stated priorities in relation to reducing alcohol harm. Funding to ADPs should be restored to 2015/16 levels in the next Scottish budget."

It emerged following April's budget that many health boards – including Lanarkshire, Grampian and Fife – would lose hundreds of thousands of pounds in funding for ADPs.

The reduction comes despite the fact Scotland has one of the worst drug death rates in Europe, and around two-and-a-half times that of the UK.

In 2016, there were a record 827 drug-related deaths in Scotland.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"The BMA is quite right to criticise the SNP over these funding cuts.

"It's very clearly the wrong thing to do while Scotland battles such major problems with drug and alcohol addiction, among the very worst in Europe.

"Doctors know best when it comes to these matters, and ministers ought to listen.

"It was a mistake for the Scottish Government to cut ADP funding, and now it must reverse those changes.

"If it does not, we risk seeing even more lives wasted in future years

because people with drug and alcohol problems simply won't have the support network they need."