

Health boards shortchanged by SNP budget

18 Feb 2019



Health boards in Scotland have been shortchanged by tens of millions of pounds as a result of SNP budget decisions, it has emerged.

In finance secretary Derek Mackay's budget, he increased the overall health spend by 5.3 per cent, according to the Scottish Parliament's Information Service (SPICe).

However, territorial health boards – who are in charge of delivering the vast majority of NHS care – received just a 3.8 per cent uplift.

The changes saw health board budgets for 2019/20 rise from £9.452 billion to £9.811 billion.

But if the 5.3 per cent figure had been applied, they would have got £9.953 billion – a difference of £142 million.

In previous years, overall health budget increases have been passed on entirely to health boards.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said that gulf could help fund thousands of nurses and better equip health boards at a time of increasing challenges.

SPICe said the overwhelming reason for the disparity was a transfer of £120 million from the health budgets to local government.

Thanks to the UK Conservative Government's decision to invest an extra £20 billion in the NHS, an additional £2 billion will be available to invest in Scotland's health service – the largest cash injection in its history.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“Health boards are the ones on the front line, and responsible for delivering the vast majority of NHS work.

“It's therefore crucial that, when the overall health budget increases, that is passed on to the territorial health boards too.

“Instead, the SNP is short-changing them to the tune of tens of millions of pounds. That could pay for nurses, midwives, GPs and go some way to addressing the chaotic situation on many of our hospital wards.

“There's no-one to blame but the SNP for this – the party has been in sole charge of health for almost 12 years now.

“What’s more, the nationalists have even more money to spend on health thanks to increased health spending in the UK, which then comes to Scotland via Barnett Consequentials.”