

Hundreds waiting too long for drug and alcohol treatment

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Hundreds of Scots with drug and alcohol problems are waiting too long for treatment, new figures have revealed today.

There are currently 364 patients who have been waiting for more than six weeks for NHS help to tackle drug and alcohol addiction, around 14 per cent of all those seeking support.

That's an increase from 9 per cent, or 236 people, at the same point last year.

The statistics were published by ISD Scotland, and show some people are even being forced to wait more than 18 weeks for treatment to start.

Even prisoners are receiving a better service than patients on the outside, with almost all inmates getting help within three weeks.

A postcode lottery was also revealed; just 80 per cent of addicts in the Lothians are seen within three weeks, compared to almost everyone in places like Forth Valley and Lanarkshire.

The Scottish Conservatives said the war on drugs would never be won unless all patients seeking help received treatment urgently.

At First Minister's Questions last week, interim leader Jackson Carlaw highlighted examples of drug rehabilitation services being snubbed for cash while government money was poured into methadone programmes and centres allowing heroin addicts to inject drugs under NHS supervision.

Scottish Conservative public health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

"Scotland is getting worse at providing prompt help to patients with drug and alcohol problems.

"This should be an absolute priority for the SNP government to sort out.

"Someone battling these issues simply can't wait for several weeks to go by without getting some kind of support.

"It's time the SNP changed its approach here.

"Instead of creating centres to help people inject heroin, or pouring millions into methadone programmes, it should be focusing on getting people off drugs altogether.

“That’s what the patients themselves want, and failure to provide help on time to those who seek it simply isn’t good enough.”