

SNP forced into 'major u-turn' on state guardians

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The Scottish Government has announced a major u-turn in relation to its controversial named person policy following a Supreme Court ruling.

Today, education secretary John Swinney revealed public bodies operating the scheme will be forced to think twice before sharing information about a young person or their family.

That means parents who do not accept the advice of named persons will not be subsequently viewed with suspicion by authorities, the Scottish Conservatives said.

The change follows a ruling last year by the UK Supreme Court which found aspects of the SNP's state guardian legislation unlawful.

Mr Swinney set out the changes as part of the Children and Young People (Information Sharing) (Scotland) bill.

The Scottish Conservatives said while the clarification on data sharing was welcome, serious concerns about the legislation remain.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"The named person policy was a huge mistake from beginning to end which is why the Scottish Government has been forced into a major u-turn.

"The announcement today effectively means that no parent will now be forced to accept the advice from his or her child's named person and that refusal to accept advice will no longer be treated with suspicion by the authorities.

"The Supreme Court ruling made clear that the data-sharing aspects of the Act were unlawful on account of the fact that they had the potential to contravene other legislation and to allow state intrusion into family life.

"Quite rightly, the vast majority of parents found that unacceptable.

"The Scottish Conservatives believe that the revised bill still raises many questions and it also lays bare the extent of the expense to the taxpayer of this ill-conceived policy."

More information on the bill is here:

<https://news.gov.scot/news/supporting-children-and-families-1>

The Scottish Conservatives have opposed the named person scheme from the outset:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/named-person/>