

SNP must deliver flexible childcare

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The Scottish Conservatives will use their debating time today to call for considerable improvements in the current and future provision of childcare and to call for progress on the childcare account.

The Scottish Conservatives will highlight that some of the most important ways of improving the delivery of high quality childcare are related to improving accessibility and flexibility for parents.

In addition, since the announcement by former minister Mark McDonald last year, the SNP has made no progress on the childcare account, which the Scottish Conservatives have advocated for several years.

The debate follows the recent critical report by the Accounts Commission which stated that there were “significant risks” that local authorities would not be in a position to deliver the Scottish Government’s target of 1,140 hours by 2020.

The motion also calls for the SNP to engage constructively with all groups and local authorities to agree a comprehensive strategy that will deliver quality childcare provision across Scotland.

Scottish Conservative childcare and early years spokesman, Michelle Ballantyne commented:

“The Scottish Conservatives believe that the delivery of high quality childcare will not happen unless there are considerable improvements in its accessibility and flexibility for parents.

“Increasing the number of hours on a targeted basis is important but it can only bring limited benefit if these additional hours cannot be used effectively.

“The recent Audit Scotland/Accounts Commission report slated the SNP for underestimating the costs of the intended 1140 hours provision. It also criticised the SNP for failing to undertake any analysis to determine what makes qualitative improvements in the provision of childcare and how it will be made easier for parents to access.

“This is a completely unsatisfactory situation which is creating a great deal of anger amongst parents and hampering the incentive of providers to make childcare more flexible.

“The Scottish Conservatives have long argued for a flexible childcare voucher system.

“Last year, the Scottish Government said it was looking to introduce exactly this to be known as a childcare account but nothing has happened. It is time to change all that and give parents what they want.”