

SNP must work 'proactively' to tackle shortage of residential drug rehab

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The SNP government must start tackling the shortage of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services 'proactively' rather than reacting to bad headlines, a north-east MSP said today.

Alexander Burnett asked about the future of local services at First Minister's Questions today following the closure of the Alexander Clinic in Oldmeldrum.

Mr Burnett had tabled a question to the government earlier this week, which prompted media coverage of the issue.

Today, Nicola Sturgeon said that the government's new recovery strategy is due to be published in October.

Drug and alcohol support workers in Aberdeenshire were contacted by civil servants by telephone after the publication of the article and told that actions they had been calling for inclusion in the document would now be delivered.

Speaking after FMQs today, Mr Burnett, MSP for Aberdeenshire West, said:

"I am pleased to hear that the Scottish Government will be focusing on residential rehabilitation in its national delivery plan.

"I am concerned, however, that it seems to have taken press coverage of my intervention on the issue to spur officials into action in Aberdeenshire.

"We should not have to chase the government to deliver on this hugely important issue.

"Drug deaths in Scotland are spiralling and a key part of the strategy for turning around those figures will be the provision of more residential rehab.

"The north-east cannot be left without any facilities to help those struggling with addiction.

"I will keep the pressure on this SNP government to deliver better support for people in the north-east and indeed across Scotland."