

SNP putting 'cart before the horse' in bid to empty prisons

20 Aug 2019



The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP government of putting the 'cart before the horse' as they abolished prison sentences of up to a year before convening the group to improve community orders.

The National Community Justice Leadership Group will meet for the first time tomorrow to implement the SNP's policy of increasing alternatives to prison sentences for criminals.

However, the SNP already introduced a presumption against prison terms of less than a year in favour of community sentences in June this year.

The latest statistics show that last year 9,500 criminals were sentenced to less than 12 months in jail. Out of that 9,500, 100 were convicted of attempted murder or serious assault, 98 were sexual offenders and 329 were convicted of handling offensive weapons.

The Scottish Conservatives have accused the SNP of emptying Scottish prisons at any cost.

Liam Kerr, Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary said:

"The SNP has put the cart before the horse here – they have already abolished prison sentences of less than a year but are only now considering how to improve the overwhelmed community justice system.

"The SNP's abolition of prison sentences of up to a year could see 9,500 criminals a year avoid jail and go into the community – that includes drug dealers, violent attackers and child pornographers.

"Already the community justice system cannot cope as a third of community sentences are never completed and a quarter of do not include any unpaid work element.

"In addition, the SNP's claims on reoffending were totally torn apart by academics in evidence to the justice committee.

"Only this week a judge expressed that he would have sent a serial offender to jail for serious wildlife crimes if the SNP government hadn't tied his hands.

"The SNP is relentlessly emptying our prisons regardless of the lack of capacity in the community justice system, the lack of evidence regarding reoffending, the insult to victims and the risk to the safety of the public."