

SNP urged to act on Scotland's 1000-a-day methadone prescription crisis

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The SNP government has been urged to reduce the number of drug users who are “parked” on methadone – after new figures revealed more than 1000 prescriptions are dished out a day.

Statistics obtained by the Scottish Conservatives revealed 406,588 items were dispensed in 2018/19, the equivalent of 1114 a day.

And while that's a slight reduction on previous years, it still means thousands of heroin users are being given next to no chance of fully recovering from addiction.

Scotland is currently the drug deaths capital of the developed world, with nearly 1200 people losing their lives to the problem last year alone.

Of those recorded deaths, methadone was present as a contributing factor in nearly half, more than any other drug.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said while methadone had a place in treating drug addiction, it was being far too heavily relied upon, and re-enforced his calls for a review of the programme.

The overall methadone prescription figures show that, since coming to power in 2007, the SNP government has overseen the dispensing of more than 5.6 million doses of the substance.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“People in receipt of methadone are known to services, in regular contact with them, and should be prime candidates for some proper help and pathways into rehabilitation services.

“Instead of parking these vulnerable individuals on methadone, we should be targeting them with a life plan, so they can beat addiction once and for all and turn their lives around.

“In many cases former addicts tell us that methadone is merely prolonging their problems and, as we can see from the most recent published figures, has a fair chance of contributing to drug deaths.

"That is why the Scottish Conservatives have called for an independent review of the methadone programme.

"There are a number of other areas and policy suggestions we want to see SNP ministers do to address Scotland's drugs crisis, and finally sorting out the over-reliance on methadone is one of them.

"If it fails to do this now, we will see even more tragic and avoidable deaths in future.

"It is clear that the SNP's 10-year drugs strategy has failed. We need a totally new approach to this national public health emergency.

"That's why I have called on Nicola Sturgeon to take personal leadership and responsibility of the situation and coordinate a new approach."