

Staff shortages see troubled police call centre pay £4k a week in overtime

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Police Scotland have forked out more than £4000 a week in overtime payments for a troubled call-handling centre since it absorbed the work of two other facilities.

The Bilston Glen centre, which was at the centre of the M9 tragedy controversy, took on the work of other facilities in Stirling and Glenrothes in April 2015.

And since then, more than £350,000 has been paid to police staff working overtime to fill gaps in the rota and deal with the increased demand.

The Scottish Conservatives, who obtained the data through Freedom of Information, said it proved the centre has been inadequately resourced from the start, and another example of bad forward-planning by the SNP.

It reveals overtime payments at Bilston Glen reached £289,728 in 2015/16, and £60,852 so far in 2016/17.

John Yuill and Lamara Bell died in 2015 when the car they were travelling in crashed off the M9.

And despite the car's location being reported to the single force's 101 number, it took three days for officers to arrive at the scene.

The delay was blamed on problems with logging calls at Bilston Glen, where staff complained of a lack of resources and insufficient training.

The Scottish Government was also accused of ignoring warnings about resources in call-handling centres for up to 18 months before the tragedy hit.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"Everyone accepts some overtime payments will be necessary in facilities the size of Bilston Glen.

"However, the sheer scale of these points to a major problem with staffing and resources there.

"If the Scottish Government had ensured these facilities were properly staffed to begin with, there wouldn't be a requirement for additional payments of this magnitude.

"The SNP was warned about this in advance of centralising these units, but as usual ignored them completely.

"Now we see the financial cost of that, not to mention a reduction in performance which has resulted in extremely damaging publicity for Police Scotland.

"This is something the Scottish Government needs to get under control as a matter of urgency."

To see a copy of the Freedom of Information request, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/17-0045-Data.pdf>

Resources at the Bilston Glen facility came under the spotlight following the M9 tragedy:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2015/09/ruth-snp-ignored-call-centre-warnings-for-18-months/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2015/11/report-reveals-police-call-handling-failings/>